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JANUARY 19, 2009

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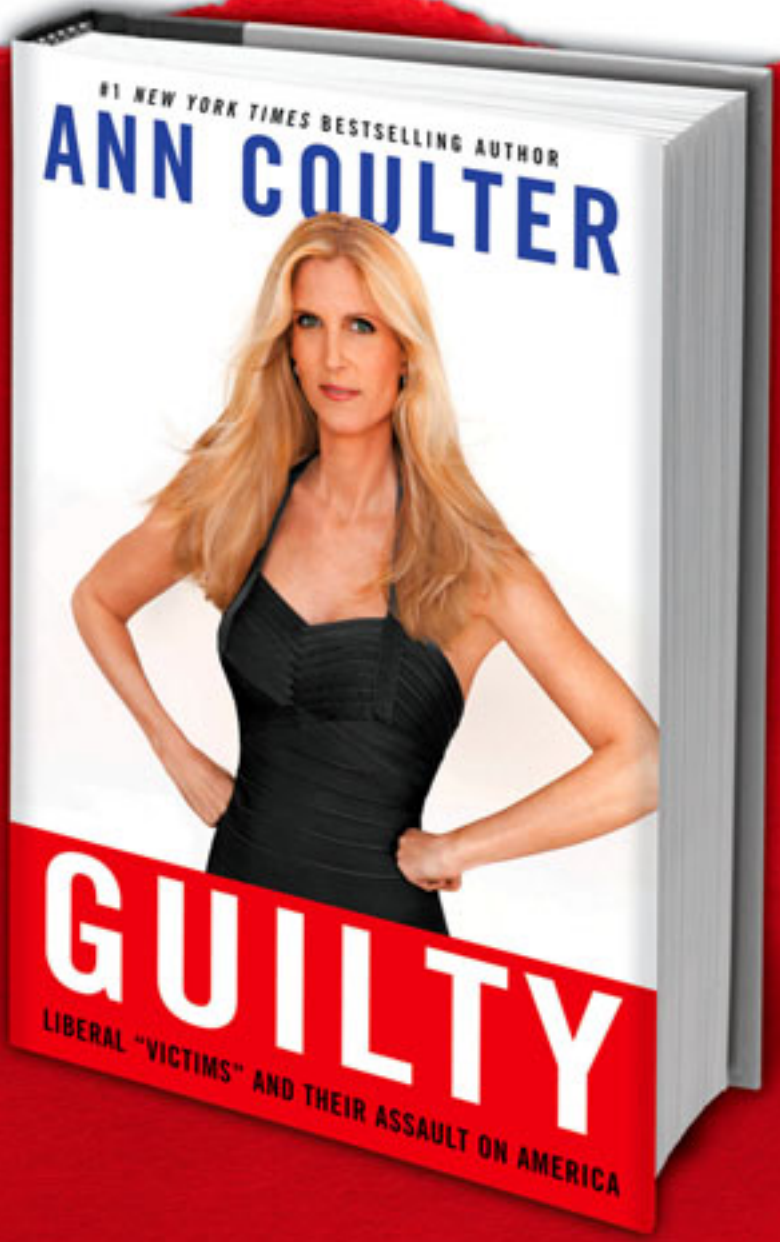

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Dr. Scott P. Stevens is Professor of Computer Information Systems and Management Science at James Madison University, where he has taught for over 20 years. He received his Ph.D. in Mathematics from The Pennsylvania State University. A frequent consultant in the business arena, Professor Stevens has been honored repeatedly for his remarkable teaching abilities.

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The Group of Five

It may be surprising to learn that living presidents don't get together as often as you might think. This January 7 photograph of the incoming and outgoing chief executives, and their predecessors, is the first gathering of ex-presidents since the funeral of Gerald Ford (2007). But it is also the first time that all the living exes have been photographed together in the Oval Office since 1981, when Ford, Richard Nixon, and Jimmy Carter visited Ronald Reagan before leaving to attend the funeral of Anwar Sadat. That was almost 30 years ago.

Maybe the discomfort of the occasion is too much, even for these seasoned politicians. You get the sense, from this picture, that the smiles are forced, the postures are awkward, the mumblings are banal, the faces reveal all manner of unspoken thoughts. As he stands slightly apart from the others, what is Nobel laureate Jimmy Carter saying to himself? As Bill Clinton looks off into the middle distance, what does he see? Is the pin-striped George H.W. Bush actually saying something to Barack Obama, or just gesturing? Obama looks like someone just told him a mildly funny joke, and Bush II looks like he's waiting for a tailor to pin his sleeves.

The Scrapbook suspects that Bush II and Obama are practicing their nation-unifying cordiality, and that Bush I is being his usual self, trying to put the new guy at ease. Carter has an expression on his face that betrays his well-known contempt for the other four. Bill Clinton was quoted as saying "I love this rug," but from his resolute gaze towards the little anteroom where he consulted with a famous intern, The Scrapbook knows what he was thinking. ♦

Raising the Drawbridge

The Scrapbook has seldom looked kindly on the pronouncements of Representative James Moran, the ethically challenged Democratic congressman from Northern Virginia. But even a broken clock is right twice a day, and when presented with the Inauguration Day plan to close all major highways and bridges into Washington, D.C., from Virginia, Moran did something he frequently does: He exploded.

"The Secret Service, they're insane," he sputtered to the *Washington Post*. "This is security on steroids. They are imposing major obstacles on people who have a right to be there for the inauguration." We're with you on two out of three, Congressman.

In fact, insanity is not the problem that afflicts the Secret Service; arrogance is. Yes, the Secret Service is charged with protecting the lives and safety of senior federal officials; and yes, this is a dangerous world. But if their mission is taken to its logical conclusion—and we seem to be headed in that direction—then the Secret Service would permanently insulate presidents from public exposure, preferably tucking them away in a bunker somewhere, and every U.S. citizen would be considered a potential assassin, and treated as such.

The Obama presidency-to-be is a case in point. Two weeks ago the Obama family decided to deposit themselves in a swank Washington hotel across Lafayette Square from the White House. (Most incoming presidents have waited until just before inauguration to descend on the nation's capital.) This has not only put the departing Bush administration in an awkward position, it has also afforded the Secret Service yet another opportunity to expand its power. Several blocks around the hotel have been closed to vehicular traffic—"security on steroids," as Congressman Moran would say—causing a permanent state of gridlock in downtown Washington. Of course, this affects more than pointy-headed bureaucrats and Democratic fundraisers: It is a major inconvenience to the merchants, office workers, deliverymen, nurses and physicians, florists, clerks, waitresses, and janitors who earn a living in the vicinity.

Now, according to the *Post*, a consortium of the Secret Service and "area transportation officials" have decreed, for the first time in history, that American citizens will be barred by police from entering the capital city from south of the Potomac River on Inauguration Day, January 20. All major Virginia highways inside the Capital

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Beltway will be barred to vehicular traffic; all bridges across the Potomac will be closed. Adding lunacy to injury, no restrictions whatsoever will apply to people crossing into the District of Columbia from Maryland—which, from a security standpoint, makes no sense: At least Virginians have to cross a river to get into Washington.

The blogosphere has been having a lot of fun with this, claiming (among other things) that it's all a Yankee plot to keep Rebels from joining in the festivities. The Scrapbook is confident that this isn't a replay of the Civil War, but the truth of the matter is no less serious. The Secret Service and "area transportation officials" have been in a state of near-hysteria since November 4, warning that untold millions of people will descend on Washington for Barack Obama's swearing-in, straining local resources and creating havoc. The effect of these apocalyptic visions will probably be far fewer pilgrims and far smaller crowds on January 20. But it has encouraged the Secret Service—which, during the past decade, has permanently closed historic avenues around the Capitol building, White House, and public monuments—to spread its ever-growing authority, transforming the nation's capital into one big airport security zone.

Presidents have been reluctant to argue with the Secret Service, but perhaps Barack Obama's idea of change will include taking a second look at security on steroids. Lest we forget: The Secret Service has a difficult job to perform; but the United States is a democracy, public officials are public servants, and "security" is not a device to empower one federal agency at the expense of citizens' rights. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'All day yesterday inside the Hay-Adams, locals tried their best to jump-start that relationship. Just off the lobby, where a lavish $65-a-plate Sunday brunch was underway, almost none of the well-dressed diners mentioned Obama or his family already ensconced in a suite upstairs. Don't let the cool demeanors fool you, though, said one diner. 'That's what everyone's thinking about even if they don't say it. . . . Just to be in the same building, to be breathing the same air . . . '" ("Obama Arrives in Style: Crowds Greet President-Elect at Hotel," *Washington Post*, January 5, 2009). ♦

A Steiner Show

A note especially for our readers in the Washington, D.C., area. Peter Steiner, whose cartoons once graced this page, will have a collection of paintings—"Portraits and Self-Portraits (2005-2009)"—on exhibit at the Embassy of Austria through April 17, 2009. The opening reception will be this coming Thursday, January 15, at 7:30 P.M. (with *vin d'honneur* to follow). There is no charge for admission, but you must RSVP at 202-895-6776 or www.austrianculturalforum.com/events-registration. ♦

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Casual

Donald E. Westlake, 1933-2008

The great Donald Westlake died of a heart attack on New Year's Eve. When I heard the news, I did what I thought he'd want me to do: I reread a couple of his comic crime novels, dissolving several times into helpless laughter.

Death and laughter: These were two of Westlake's themes. Or would it be better to say that his themes were life and laughter? There were plenty of deaths in his books, especially in his series of noir thrillers (written under the pseudonym Richard Stark), starring an amoral and extremely competent criminal named Parker. But Westlake seemed unpreoccupied with death. He refused to indulge in a tragic view of the universe.

It's true that his comic mysteries, like all intelligent comedies, have an undercurrent of melancholy. This is especially the case for those featuring the ingenious-but-cursed-by-the-gods master thief John Archibald Dortmunder and the rest of his New York gang, who gather to plot their ill-fated heists at the O.J. Bar and Grill on Amsterdam Avenue. The Dortmunder series—which will amount to 14 novels when the last, *Get Real*, is published posthumously—is the jewel in the Westlakean crown. You can get a sense of the Dortmunder novels' worldview from the wonderful and good-natured fatalism of some of the titles: *Nobody's Perfect*, *Why Me?*, *Don't Ask*, *What's the Worst That Could Happen?*, *Bad News*, and *What's So Funny?*

To be the author of both the greatest series of comic mysteries and one of the best series of noir thrillers is pretty impressive. But there's much more to Westlake's *oeuvre* than Parker and Dortmunder. Over the course of half a century, Westlake produced in the neighborhood of 100 novels (for a list, go to donaldwestlake.com). They feature an amazing variety of inventive plots, a startling array of narrative techniques, and an extraordinary range of brilliantly (and seemingly effortlessly) sketched characters.

I was talking with Steven Lenzner (see his Westlake review essays in the July 2, 2001, and September 1, 2008, issues) about why Westlake comes across not only as an impressive author but also as an attractive human being. Steve commented that his writing combines, in a very unusual way, humanity with a lack of sentimentality. That seems exactly right.

ULF ANDERSEN / GETTY IMAGES

One of the unusual things about Westlake's books—especially the comic mysteries—is how enjoyable it is to read them a second and even a third time. You notice jokes and subtleties you missed the first time when the wit and verve of the narrative swept you along. He wrote with both a strikingly light touch and remarkably inconspicuous precision. The mystery writer Lawrence Block commented a few years ago that Westlake had "never written a bad sentence." (He added, in the spirit of the master: "Of course he's young yet. Give him time…")

Here's Westlake himself on how he learned his art of writing:

> When I was 14 or 15, I'd read *The Thin Man* (my first Hammett), and it was an astonishing read, I believe the single most important learning experience of my career. It was a sad, lonely, lost book, but it pretended to be cheerful and aware and full of good fellowship.
>
> I hadn't known it was possible to do that, to seem to be saying one thing while you really said a different thing or even the opposite. It was three-dimensional writing, like three-dimensional chess, a writing style you could look through like water and glimpse the fish swimming by underneath.

Westlake's writing—I dare say more than Hammett's—was three dimensional.

I met Westlake only once, for a cup of coffee here in Washington. I probably admired him too much to have an easy conversation with him—but he at least found the encounter pleasant enough that he submitted a short piece to the magazine, which we of course published ("Reading the President," June 10, 2002).

Just before Nobel season in 2006, the *Los Angeles Times* asked several commentators for prize recommendations. I suggested Westlake for literature: "Enough with honoring self-consciously solemn, angst-ridden and pseudo-deep chroniclers of the human condition. Westlake is smart, clever and witty—a prolific craftsman—and deep. But do the Nobel judges have a sense of humor? I doubt it."

Don saw my endorsement, and wrote a nice note, saying in part: "All I can say is, aw, you shouldn'ta."

Well, all I can say is, I shoulda. And the judges shoulda. (But they didn't, and they won't.) And you should read Westlake if you haven't, or reread him if you have. As Westlake put it in the titles to two of my favorites: *Trust Me on This*. And, *Baby, Would I Lie?*

William Kristol

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the weekly Standard

Bush's Achievements

The postmortems on the presidency of George W. Bush are all wrong. The liberal line is that Bush dangerously weakened America's position in the world and rushed to the aid of the rich and powerful as income inequality worsened. That is twaddle. Conservatives—okay, not all of them—have only been a little bit kinder. They give Bush credit for the surge that saved Iraq, but not for much else.

He deserves better. His presidency was far more successful than not. And there's an aspect of his decision-making that merits special recognition: his courage. Time and time again, Bush did what other presidents, even Ronald Reagan, would not have done and for which he was vilified and abused. That—defiantly doing the right thing—is what distinguished his presidency.

Bush had ten great achievements (and maybe more) in his eight years in the White House, starting with his decision in 2001 to jettison the Kyoto global warming treaty so loved by Al Gore, the environmental lobby, elite opinion, and Europeans. The treaty was a disaster, with India and China exempted and economic decline the certain result. Everyone knew it. But only Bush said so and acted accordingly.

He stood athwart mounting global warming hysteria and yelled, "Stop!" He slowed the movement toward a policy blunder of worldwide impact, providing time for facts to catch up with the dubious claims of alarmists. Thanks in part to Bush, the supposed consensus of scientists on global warming has now collapsed. The skeptics, who point to global *cooling* over the past decade, are now heard loud and clear. And a rational approach to the theory of manmade global warming is possible.

Second, enhanced interrogation of terrorists. Along with use of secret prisons and wireless eavesdropping, this saved American lives. How many thousands of lives? We'll never know. But, as Charles Krauthammer said recently, "Those are precisely the elements which kept us safe and which have prevented a second attack."

Crucial intelligence was obtained from captured al Qaeda leaders, including 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, with the help of waterboarding. Whether this tactic—it creates a drowning sensation—is torture is a matter of debate. John McCain and many Democrats say it is. Bush and Vice President Cheney insist it isn't. In any case, it was necessary. Lincoln once made a similar point in defending his suspension of habeas corpus in direct defiance of Chief Justice Roger Taney. "Are all the laws *but one* to go unexecuted, and the government itself go to pieces, lest that one be violated?" Lincoln asked. Bush understood the answer in wartime had to be no.

Bush's third achievement was the rebuilding of presidential authority, badly degraded in the era of Vietnam, Watergate, and Bill Clinton. He didn't hesitate to conduct wireless surveillance of terrorists without getting a federal judge's okay. He decided on his own how to treat terrorists and where they should be imprisoned. Those were legitimate decisions for which the president, as commander in chief, should feel no need to apologize.

Time and time again, Bush did what other presidents, even Ronald Reagan, would not have done and for which he was vilified and abused. That—defiantly doing the right thing—is what distinguished his presidency.

Defending, all the way to the Supreme Court, Cheney's refusal to disclose to Congress the names of people he'd consulted on energy policy was also enormously important. Democratic congressman Henry Waxman demanded the names, but the Court upheld Cheney, 7-2. Last week, Cheney defended his refusal, waspishly noting that Waxman "doesn't call me up and tell me who he's meeting with."

Achievement number four was Bush's unswerving support for Israel. Reagan was once deemed Israel's best friend in the White House. Now Bush can claim the title. He ostracized Yasser Arafat as an impediment to peace in the Middle East. This infuriated the anti-Israel forces in Europe, the Third World, and the United Nations, and was criticized by champions of the "peace process" here at home. Bush was right.

He was clever in his support. Bush announced that Ariel Sharon should withdraw the tanks he'd sent into the West Bank in 2002, then exerted zero pressure on

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Sharon to do so. And he backed the wall along Israel's eastern border without endorsing it as an official boundary, while knowing full well that it might eventually become exactly that. He was a loyal friend.

His fifth success was No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the education reform bill cosponsored by America's most prominent liberal Democratic senator Edward Kennedy. The teachers' unions, school boards, the education establishment, conservatives adamant about local control of schools—they all loathed the measure and still do. It requires two things they ardently oppose, mandatory testing and accountability.

Kennedy later turned against NCLB, saying Bush is shortchanging the program. In truth, federal education spending is at record levels. Another complaint is that it forces teachers to "teach to the test." The tests are on math and reading. They are tests worth teaching to.

Sixth, Bush declared in his second inaugural address in 2005 that American foreign policy (at least his) would henceforth focus on promoting democracy around the world. This put him squarely in the Reagan camp, but he was lambasted as unrealistic, impractical, and a tool of wily neoconservatives. The new policy gave Bush credibility in pressing for democracy in the former Soviet republics and Middle East and in zinging various dictators and kleptocrats. It will do the same for President Obama, if he's wise enough to hang onto it.

The seventh achievement is the Medicare prescription drug benefit, enacted in 2003. It's not only wildly popular; it has cost less than expected by triggering competition among drug companies. Conservatives have deep reservations about the program. But they shouldn't have been surprised. Bush advocated the drug benefit in the 2000 campaign. And if he hadn't acted, Democrats would have, with a much less attractive result.

Then there were John Roberts and Sam Alito. In putting them on the Supreme Court and naming Roberts chief justice, Bush achieved what had eluded Richard Nixon, Reagan, and his own father. Roberts and Alito made the Court indisputably more conservative. And the good news is Roberts, 53, and Alito, 58, should be justices for decades to come.

Bush's ninth achievement has been widely ignored. He strengthened relations with east Asian democracies (Japan, South Korea, Australia) without causing a rift with China. On top of that, he forged strong ties with India. An important factor was their common enemy, Islamic jihadists. After 9/11, Bush made the most of this, and Indian leaders were receptive. His state dinner for Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh in 2006 was a lovefest.

GARY LOCKE

Finally, a no-brainer: the surge. Bush prompted nearly unanimous disapproval in January 2007 when he announced he was sending more troops to Iraq and adopting a new counterinsurgency strategy. His opponents initially included the State Department, the Pentagon, most of Congress, the media, the foreign policy establishment, indeed the whole world. This makes his decision a profile in courage. Best of all, the surge worked. Iraq is now a fragile but functioning democracy.

How does Bush rank as a president? We won't know until he's judged from the perspective of two or three decades. Hindsight forced a sharp upgrading of the presidencies of Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. Given his achievements, it may have the same effect for Bush.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

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We Are All Detroiters

Matt Labash's portrait of Detroit ("The City Where the Sirens Never Sleep," December 29) was poignant and sympathetic. He wanted to write about a panoply of unique individuals and succeeded.

Nevertheless, there is a larger issue in Detroit's decline which is clear from the story but never stated; the assumptions and practices of modern welfare-state liberalism have provided ongoing palliatives to Detroit while driving the pathologies that have condemned it to a downward spiral into complete dysfunction.

Detroit desperately needs a Thatcher, and the turn in public sentiment to support her. But from whence and from what political base are they to come?

Paul J. Isaac
Larchmont, N.Y.

As a Detroiter, I have to say this was a beautiful article. Matt Labash was cruel, but spot-on.

My only complaint is that he provided no context for Saddam Hussein's getting the key to the city. For people not familiar with America's history with Saddam, it might look like Detroit supports terrorists, which is not the case.

Saddam was given the key to the city in 1980 when Iraq was a U.S. ally and partner opposed to Iranian hegemony. He donated something like half a million dollars to a Chaldean church in the city.

Eric Dennis
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Matt Labash's sober, devastating piece on Detroit is a journalistic triumph—sympathetic, graphic, sprinkled with telling quotations and photos—and utterly nonideological. Which may be just what we need now, after the election, when Americans are starting to realize that, one way or another, everyone's a Detroiter.

Thomas L. Jeffers
Milwaukee, Wis.

Reporters on Strike

Regarding the AP byline strike ("Reporters in Extremis," December 29), the Scrapbook is quite right that only a reporter's mother cares about names on wire copy. But that's not the point.

During my 18 years with United Press International, a byline meant that UPI had a reporter on the scene—as opposed to having a reporter from a newspaper phoning in notes, or some other "stringer" filing information to the nearest wire service bureau. Obviously, we could not staff all the hundreds of stories that moved on the wires every day, and many of them were pickups from other media, rewritten press releases, or other nonstaff work.

Newspapers, of course, routinely knock a wire service reporter's byline off of a story, before hacking it to fit an ever-shrinking news hole. Very often, the byline on a story was (and I'm sure still is) the name of the reporter on the scene, not the one who wrote it. The story might have been compiled in Atlanta or Dallas or New York from many sources at the scene, written, polished, and edited by a senior desk editor who is a former field reporter and (still) often a skilled wordsmith.

So with their byline strike, the AP reporters are not depriving us of the knowledge that Scoop Hotguy wrote the story, but that ol' Scoop was at the train wreck or news conference—rather than coming from an AP bureau that got a call from a corporate flack or country radio station's mobile news van.

Bill Cotterell
Tallahassee, Fla.

Great Books Sighting

After reading Christine Rosen's and Tracy Lee Simmons's articles on the Great Books in your December 22 issue ("When Books Were Great" and "Great Books Redux"), I felt compelled to share the fact that not only is there another college in the land that believes it is more important to know how to think than what to think, but it immerses its students in the history of the times in which the great thinkers wrote. I am a newly minted freshman at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tenn., where every incoming freshman follows a year-and-a-half-long series of courses known as the "Search for Values in Western Civilization and Religion," known at its inception simply as the "Man" (history of mankind) course. I am a changed person after my first semester of studying the *Nichomachean Ethics* of Aristotle and Plato's *Republic*. Not only that, but every one of my classmates, if he gave the course any attention at all, is changed as well, and we go forward in our four-year journey with the same foundation from which to grow as students of the meaning of life and what constitutes a good life. It is the reason I chose my college, and although I was lost, befuddled, and frustrated many times while deciphering the words of Plato, I have not been disappointed. There are absolute truths in this world, and Plato and Aristotle explain why this is important to know in order to be happy.

Jordan Harms
Mill Valley, Calif.

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Israeli tanks move near Gaza, January 8

REUTERS

Facing Reality

The answer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

BY DAVID GELERNTER

Several smart observers have described the root cause of the ongoing battle between Israel and Hamas in the exact same phrase: "irreconcilable differences." America and Europe are warned not to press for pointless negotiations, because the parties are irreconcilable. Israel and the Palestinians both want the same piece of land and can't both have it; Islam and Western democracy or Islam and Zionism can only be antagonists.

Warning the world against pressuring Israel is timely and important, as governments everywhere respond to Israeli self-defense by celebrating the usual worldwide Hypocrisy-Fest (complete with street demonstrations, U.N. resolutions, and the customary savage gaiety), and as Israel's battle against Hamas is denounced as immoral or "disproportionate." A proportionate response would presumably consist of Israel's launching randomly targeted missiles back into Gaza. (Hamas's rocket technique was pioneered in 1944, by the way, in Nazi Germany's V-1 "buzz bomb" attacks against Britain.)

But even though the warning (beware of forcing negotiations) is right, the premise is not. Of course Israel has no choice but to fight Hamas in Gaza. Of course the idea that all problems can be settled by diplomacy is idiotic. Yet we ought to remind ourselves that the supposed "irreconcilable differences" between Israel and the Palestinians are trumped up and phony. The facts are well known to those who care about facts, but bear repeating.

The dispute has many causes, but one root cause. If I own an old junker Buick that's worthless to me, and a stranger offers me $10,000 for it, naturally I'll take the money. But at the same time I might grow suspicious (or at least thoughtful): Maybe the thing is valuable after all. Maybe I could have got more for it.

And suppose the new owner proceeds to enthuse rapturously over the old car, and repairs and rebuilds it and makes it shine, makes it better than new, and starts exhibiting it at car fairs and winning big prizes. Under those circumstances, I'm even more likely to feel aggrieved, cheated, angry, and (especially) stupid—if I'm the kind of person who dwells on old hurts and imagined grievances. And my friends can make matters worse by egging me on. (Everyone loves a fight, especially if he can watch from the sidelines.)

Now, every human being on earth who cares about facts and can tell a lie from a truth knows that there was no such thing as "Palestinian nationalism" until modern Zionism created it out of whole cloth, by placing enormous value on a piece of land that used to seem as precious to its landlords as a rat-ridden empty lot in a burnt-out neighborhood in the middle of nowhere, in the suburbs of nothing. The Jews gradually got possession of an arid stony wasteland (*where the sun beats, / And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief / And the dry stone no sound of water*)—complete with the odd picturesque, crumbling, dirty town; and they loved it. They turned it into a gleaming, thriving modern nation, not only a military but an intellectual powerhouse. And so it is only natural that the former owners' descendants want it back, and remember how much their ancestors loved it, and how the new owners only got possession by wickedness and deceit. Such memories have the strange property of growing clearer instead of cloudier every day.

Only one thing can restore the former owners' peace of mind. They must be kicked firmly in the pants and told "stop whining and get lost" so many times that they finally move on to another grievance.

Any competent psychologist will agree: When someone is mooning over a thing he can't have because it belongs to someone else, the responsible and humane course of treatment is not temporizing sweet-talk but a

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blunt lesson in the facts of life. "No, you cannot have my wife (girlfriend, husband, etc.), and we are not going to negotiate over it; let's talk about something else." (And it really doesn't matter that the two of you used to keep company; you never loved her.) "Know Thyself" was supposedly carved on the ancient Temple at Delphi; "Face Reality" should have been carved right next to it. There is no irreconcilable difference in the fight between Israel and the Palestinians, no bone-deep dispute that will haunt humanity forever. There is only greed and envy. They never disappear, but can easily move from one target to the next. The problem will be solved as soon as the world stops trying to solve it. When the international community moves on to fresh causes, so will the Palestinians.

Islam too is held up as a basis of "irreconcilable differences" between Israel and the Palestinians. But we ought to remind ourselves that Israel fought the Six Day War in 1967 (and took possession of the West Bank and old Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and Gaza—as well as Sinai, since returned to Egypt) with the armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, supported by Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Except for the Saudis, every one of these Arab governments was a secularist or modernizing autocracy. On the Arab side the most important man by far was Nasser, führer of Egypt, who as a young man had been a "Green Shirt" (modeled on Mussolini's Black Shirts and Hitler's Brown Shirts) and stood for "non-aligned," left-leaning, bellicose secularist nationalism.

Fatah and the PLO were also secular organizations to start, and in some respects still are. (Fatah was founded in 1954, the PLO in '64; they merged in '67.) In the late '60s and 1970s, the PLO made common cause with far-left terror groups such as the Red Brigades, the Baader-Meinhof gang, and other wacko-Marxist murderers. At one point, Baader-Meinhof gangsters traveled to PLO camps for elementary terror training.

The English actress Vanessa Redgrave represents the sort of bloody-minded Westerner who supported Palestinian terrorism in the 1970s. In 1977, Redgrave made an infamous propaganda film on behalf of Palestinian terrorists. But she was hardly endorsing Islam or any other religion. She was a Marxist (and, as far as one can tell, still is). The Palestinian terrorists were members in good standing of a worldwide fraternity that included the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Communists, Castroite Cubans, the Sandinistas, and dozens of other far-left groups that mostly hated religion to the extent they bothered with it at all.

The Bush administration, which has done so many small and medium things wrong and the biggest of all things right, could leave the world a parting gift by introducing some appropriate resolution in the Security Counsel or General Assembly. A proclamation that "anti-Zionism is a form of racism" might be just the thing.

Obviously most Arabs are devout Muslims, and Islam has a long history of jihad. An event of the late 1800s suggests modern Iran: An Islamic leader in the Sudan who proclaimed himself the Mahdi, God-given ruler of the whole Islamic world and (in effect) the messiah, announced a jihad against the British colonial authorities. His army drove the British and their Egyptian allies out of the Sudan. In the process his troops slaughtered or enslaved thousands of British, Egyptians, and Sudanese and presented the Mahdi (as a sentimental remembrance of victory) with the severed head of the British commanding general on a pike. The Mahdist army then launched invasions of neighboring territories, but was finally destroyed by the British at Omdurman in 1898.

No one doubts that the Muslim religion can inspire gigantic ferocity—yet Islam, like horseradish, is available in anything from super-hot to extra-mild. Only with the rise of Khomeini's Iran in 1979, the Saudis' increasingly lavish support for the spread of Wahhabism, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 did modern Islam become the dominant hate engine of the Middle East, powering anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish, anti-Western bloodlust. The Arabs are an intensely religious-minded people, like the Jews, but the same religious devotion that is focused today on blood-and-guts Islam could also be focused on a kinder, gentler variety, such as the one preached in the 19th century by the Emir Abd el-Kader. (On Abd el-Kader, see the book by John W. Kiser, reviewed in last week's issue.) Religious devoutness persists from generation to generation, but can take many different systems and causes as its target—as Jews are well aware.

The Bush administration, which has done so many small and medium things wrong and the biggest of all things right, could leave the world a parting gift by introducing some appropriate resolution in the Security Counsel or General Assembly. A proclamation that "anti-Zionism is a form of racism" might be just the thing. (The infamous "Zionism is racism" resolution, passed in 1975 and rescinded in 1991, remains a perfect symbol of depraved worldwide attitudes to Israel.) Or a U.S. resolution might call on the U.N. to take the unprecedented step of enforcing its own charter and booting out members that preach the destruction of Israel. (Article 2 part 4: "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.") To start the ball rolling, Iran might be designated for immediate expulsion.

The resolution would be savaged and hooted down. But here and there it might make people think. ♦

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Cheney—the Exit Interview

On North Korea, the bailout, and Obama's naiveté.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

When I showed up for my interview with Vice President Dick Cheney on January 6, he was standing behind his desk in the West Wing of the White House sipping, as he often does, from a can of Sprite Zero.

I told him that I hoped we could spend a little time working through his feelings about leaving the White House after eight years. I wanted to see the softer side of Dick Cheney.

"All warm and fuzzy?" he asked, laughing. "In the last two weeks of my time in active service?"

"Yeah, you could start getting all emotional," I suggested.

He paused.

"It ain't gonna happen."

If Cheney was reluctant to open up about his feelings, his talk on policies and politics was, as ever, revealing. He thinks Barack Obama is naïve about national security. He worries that the Bush administration's aggressive intervention in the free market will do long-term damage to conservative efforts to limit government. And though he tried mightily to avoid saying so, Cheney believes that the administration's North Korea policy has failed.

In 2005, a longtime Cheney friend and adviser told me the vice president believes that world leaders are best judged by what they've done, not what they say. The adviser explained that Cheney has few illusions about the possibilities of great change and offered an example: Kim Jong Il.

Cheney had warned in 1994 that North Korea posed the greatest potential threat to the United States and that the "Agreed Framework" struck by the Clinton administration was dangerously foolish in rewarding North Korea for its bad behavior. Ten years later, when Cheney met with top Chinese officials in Beijing, North Korea was his top priority. "Our concern is that time is not necessarily on our side, that North Korea may continue to use this technology to further develop their capabilities," Cheney told Jiang Zemin, according to two officials in the room. "One of the greatest threats we face is the proliferation of those technologies."

Cheney was right. Time was not on our side. And in the four years of diplomatic failure since those meetings, we have seen evidence of the dangers of proliferation. Yet in the 50-page brochure the White House just published—*Highlights of Accomplishments and Results: The Administration of President George W. Bush, 2001-2009*—we learn: "Through the Six-Party talks, the United States worked to secure a commitment from North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and its nuclear weapons program." That claim is literally true. The United States did work to secure such a commitment. But it failed. And in the process the Bush administration prostrated itself before a dictator whose rogue regime was not long ago considered evil.

I asked Cheney about it.

THE WEEKLY STANDARD: The administration is distributing a 50-page glossy blue brochure that you may have seen—

CHENEY: I know there's one around out there.

TWS:—listing accomplishments. And on page 40—I found this interesting—the accomplishment was: "Secured a commitment from North Korea to end its nuclear program."

CORBIS

Stephen F. Hayes, a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author of* Cheney: The Untold Story of America's Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President *(HarperCollins).*

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Cheney did not need to hear the question. He dropped his chin to his chest, smiled broadly, and began shaking his head.

"Is this an accomplishment that you celebrate?" I asked him.

Still looking at the floor, the vice president paused for several seconds before answering. He looked up and flashed a puckish grin.

CHENEY: I haven't read the report.
TWS: I assure you I'm quoting it accurately.
CHENEY: (*laughing*): I'm sure you are. I don't have any doubt about that. Well, I think I'm going to take a pass.
TWS: Let me ask it in a different way. Some of our common friends in recent days and weeks have called administration policy on North Korea "preemptive capitulation." Is that too strong a criticism?
CHENEY: Steve, you've put me in a difficult position here.
TWS: That's my job, that's my job.
CHENEY: That is your job. And I think—well, let me make a—without responding to that, let me make a statement on North Korea.

He stopped smiling.

CHENEY: I think the president has worked this one very hard, and properly so. But the Six-Party Talks constituted progress in the sense that we provided a mechanism by which you could get China actively involved, which is crucial because China has got more leverage over North Korea than anybody else. And—but we clearly have not achieved our objective with North Korea, primarily because the North Koreans have refused to keep the commitments they have made in connection with the negotiations that we've had—that they did not give us a full and complete disclosure of their nuclear program as they promised they would.
TWS: Did you expect that they would?
CHENEY: They tested a weapon, obviously, in '06. They have—they've failed to live up to the obligations that they agreed to in those earlier negotiations.
TWS: And yet we continue to provide concessions.
CHENEY: And they also built a reactor to produce plutonium and cerium. There's a major example of proliferation to a terrorist-sponsoring state. So, you know, we've worked very hard on North Korea, but we haven't solved the problem.
TWS: After all of those things—I think this is what I was getting at with my question—after all of those things—
CHENEY: I'm trying to avoid your question.

Cheney laughs.

TWS: Well, I'll try one more time.
CHENEY: All right.
TWS: After all of those things, we went to them and offered to take them off of the state sponsor of terror list, after they were caught red-handed building a reactor in Syria, which is, as we both know, a state sponsor of terror. Was it appropriate to go to them and say, hey, we'll take you off of this list, given the whole range of their activities that you just outlined?
CHENEY: Well—Lea Anne [Foster, the vice-presidential spokesman] is over there saying, what's he going to say? (*Laughter*.)
TWS: I'm just thinking of the history books here.
CHENEY: Yes. It's not a decision that I was enthusiastic about. I don't make those decisions. I've been involved, obviously, in that ongoing debate, but I think the North Koreans have not lived up to their obligations.

Cheney used similar language in discussing the Bush administration's efforts to prop up the U.S. automobile industry—"it's a decision the president made, and I work for the president"—and he is pessimistic about its future without dramatic change.

I do believe that the industry needs to undergo radical restructuring. And I don't think they're going to. I don't think they've got much prospect of being viable long-term until they do that, until they come to grips with the basic fundamental problems that are now built into their business, like for example, labor agreements and all those kinds of concerns.

Cheney said that the timing of the industry's trouble—coming in the midst of a major financial crisis and a global recession—left the administration with few options.

CHENEY: I think the package that the president came up with, which I supported, is about as good as you could do under the circumstances. And if you were in the beginning of an administration, or if you were operating on this issue at a time when we didn't have a major recession underway or a financial crisis in the markets, it might have been something else.
TWS: You'd just let them fail?
CHENEY: I'll leave it where it's at. I thought I stated it rather artfully.

The vice president is concerned that the Bush administration may have paved the way for a dramatic expansion of the federal government. "I worry a little bit that what we had to do in the financial area has provided cover for folks who want to vastly expand the size of the government. I think it's a problem," he says. "They've always wanted to do this, and now they think they've got a shot at it because they've got the House and the Senate and the White House, and a rationale." He adds: "They can say, 'well, you guys started it, but look what you did for the banks.' I think that's a poor analogy, but it might be a successful political argument."

Cheney is more optimistic about the long-term prospects for those Bush administration national security policies that have kept the country safe for more than seven years. He believes that the incoming president might quickly come to appreciate the value of the Terrorist Surveillance Program and the special interrogation program for high-value detainees—the two Cheney cites as most important.

CHENEY: I hope that what will happen is they sit down every day now and avail themselves of the same intelligence information the president and I have been looking at for eight years; that they will come to understand the enormous importance of continuing to collect that intelligence; and that they will resist the temptation to automatically take their campaign rhetoric and make that policy. Now, will they do that? I don't know.
TWS: Was the campaign rhetoric then something born of naïveté?
CHENEY: Absolutely—or, well, I can't say it was malicious; it was the stuff that a lot of Democrats and a lot of people in the press have hammered us

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with for years. And I think on the left wing of the Democratic party, there are some people who believe that we really tortured and—then in the course of the Democratic primary process, he rode that issue pretty hard.

He's now going to be President of the United States, and two weeks from today we swear him in. And it would be a tragedy if he let his policies be founded on nothing more than the rhetoric of his campaign. It's got to be based on knowledge and experience.

To that end, Cheney says he's heartened by Barack Obama's decision to retain Robert Gates. The vice president, who also said that Obama had assembled a "pretty good team" on national security, believes Gates will push the new president to continue the controversial programs.

I'm hopeful, for example, that his decision to keep a guy like Bob Gates means he's at least open-minded enough on these issues, to sit down and find out the facts, find out what we've really done, find out what we've learned from it, before he automatically closes down those operations, because there's—you know, as I say, if you believe, as I do, that those programs have been instrumental in keeping us safe, then the conclusion would be if you cancel those programs, you may well enhance the danger to the nation.

I asked Cheney for his thoughts on Obama's election. He recalled the racial tension in the country when he first arrived in Washington in 1968 and noted, with a bit of wonder, perhaps even emotion, in his voice:

Forty years later we're swearing in the first African-American president in our history. There are going to be millions of people down there on the Mall to celebrate. That's great and that's—talk about change.

But he went on,

I didn't support Barack Obama; I wouldn't vote for him. He and I have got pretty radically different views of the world. I'm a conservative Republican and nobody ever accused him of that. ♦

A Scholar and a Gentleman

Samuel P. Huntington, 1927-2008.

BY ELIOT A. COHEN

As the obituary notices will tell you, Samuel Huntington was a controversial figure. They lead, normally, with a reference to "Clash of Civilizations?" his 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article, which outraged many readers by predicting that the end of the Cold War would usher in, not an era of good feelings and international cooperation, but rather antipathies more deeply rooted than the tensions between states. It was vintage Sam—tough-minded and lucid, bringing scholarship to illuminate the problems of the political world. Reasonable critics confessed themselves unsettled by it, and some have even ruefully conceded that Sam got it more nearly right than they did.

If the journalists do a bit more investigating, they discover that Sam was the greatest political scientist of his generation. They might note, for example, that in 1957 he published *The Soldier and the State*, a landmark work on civil-military relations with which the rest of us interested in the subject still wrestle. Not many 30-year-old assistant professors write books that live half a century later. Some mention *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), an equally monumental work in a completely different field, political development, or his writings on American politics and foreign policy.

Sam's numerous books and no less important articles (I still assign a 1962 essay, "Patterns of Violence in World Politics," in one of my courses) are a staggering corpus of work. But they represent only a portion of his legacy. For Sam has left behind him a vast array of students, in government, journalism, and business, who are what they are in part because of him. Some of them followed his path to academe—they include professors at Columbia, Princeton, Harvard, and many other institutions—because they were inspired by an academic ideal that he embodied. I know, because I am one of them.

I had my first encounter with Sam as an undergraduate, timidly asking the great man to advise me on my senior honors thesis. He later became my graduate adviser, and after that a senior colleague at Harvard. It took me a long, long time to call him Sam, even as it took me a long time to realize that he was, in some ways, a shy man. It took me no time at all—I remember the shrinking feeling in the gut very well—to know that anything I gave him to read would be examined swiftly, its weaknesses exposed bluntly, on the notion that the academic life was not about being gentle in exposing inconsistency, sloppiness, or error. It took me only a little longer to realize that I had a mentor who would push me hard, but would look after me and my interests

Eliot A. Cohen is counselor of the Department of State. On January 21 he will return to his position as a professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

REUTERS

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to the end. Sam was the kind of professor who gave his students a lifetime warranty.

Sam expected you to push back, moreover, and to subject his own arguments to scrutiny no less severe. If anyone was entitled to professorial ego, it was Sam, but he was ever ready to say, "Hmf. I never thought of that before." In Sam's circle there were liberals and conservatives, and (rather more bitterly divided in some ways) adherents of different methodological schools, from the historically oriented traditionalists to the more quantitative researchers or formal modelers of the contemporary academy. He really didn't care which you were: What concerned him was whether you had something interesting and plausible to say about how the world worked.

Sam's daunting intellect played across an expressive face. A dubious assertion would elicit a pushed forward jaw, eyebrows arching up, head tilted back, the look of cool, razor-like intelligence radiating from blue eyes. It turned more than one graduate student's knees to water. But Sam's other side was a toothy, boyish grin, a roaring laugh, the kind of look that Michael Shaara caught in his fictional account of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain—"that clean-eyed, scrubbed-brain, naive look of the happy professor." He and Nancy—whose warmth and kindness embraced all, from retired ambassador to timid graduate student—welcomed us to their homes in Boston and Martha's Vineyard. After jumping the waves at Sam's summer place, or having dinner with visiting generals and foreign diplomats at his home on Beacon Hill, some of the terror abated.

In this habit of welcoming students into his home, as in so many other ways, Sam was of the old Harvard, a place quieter, tattier, smaller, and decidedly more traditional-Boston than the glitzy, wealthy, expansive Harvard of today. He was of the old school when it came to what used to be called "good citizenship" at the university: If the dean asked you to do something for the institution, you did it. And if you were a famous professor you did not use that as an excuse to be relieved of teaching undergraduates or partaking of the grind of committee work. No, you worked harder; you were of the institution, and when it needed your services, you gave them.

Sam traveled to Washington, and worked for a couple of years on the Carter National Security Council, but he was never of Washington. He was an academic through and through, but a scholar—one, alas, of a breed always endangered, and now perhaps more rare—who combined academic distinction with the ability to make learning speak to the world of affairs. "Policy-relevant basic research," he always declared, is what we do at the Harvard Center for International Affairs, over which he presided for many years. And judging by the series of politicians and statesmen who asked his advice, relevant it clearly was. At the end of the day, though, Sam knew where he stood: He returned to Harvard from Washington with a sigh of relief. He was, to the core, a professor, not a policy intellectual angling for the big job in government.

Sam did not shrink from a fight, be it in the realm of ideas or the trenches of academic life. (Regarding the latter, don't be misled by the oft-repeated dictum about the fights so bitter because the stakes so petty—we're talking jobs and careers here.) In the bad days of Vietnam he was heckled and hounded for having done consulting work for the Department of Defense, and in later years he faced the outrage of superficial readers or, more often, those who thought they knew what he meant when they had failed to read what he had written. Sam didn't care, not because he was a callous man, but because he cared, first, foremost, and always, about Harvard's motto: *Veritas*. The truth mattered, and all else was secondary.

A great professor lives after his death in his writings, to be sure, but as much, and sometimes even more, in the lives he has touched, the values he has imparted, the example he has set. So it was with Sam, the revered teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend of so many students who will miss him sorely and strive, in his absence, to emulate him. ♦

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Richard John Neuhaus, 1936-2009

A gaping hole in the public square.

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

He was the greatest reader I ever met. The greatest reader, and a cigar smoker, and a walker, and a preacher, and a brewer of some of the worst coffee ever made. What odd items the mind latches onto in moments of grief: the tilt of a friend's head, the way he used his hands when he spoke, an awful meal shared a decade back, a conversation about a book only a month ago.

Only a month ago—it was only a month ago that he was still whole, still sharp, still himself. Novels and movies always seem to me to get it wrong. Grief doesn't conjure up ghosts. Grief renders the world itself ghostly. The absent thing alone is real, and in comparison, all present things are pale, gray, and indistinct: a vague background to the sharp-edged portrait of what is gone.

And, oh, what sharp edges Richard John Neuhaus had. He wrote and wrote and wrote—a discipline of writing that almost every other writer I know has told me feels almost like an indictment: 30 books, and innumerable essays, and all those talks he flew around to give. And, just as an incidental, 12,000 words a month poured out in the column, The Public Square, that anchored every issue of *First Things*, the magazine he founded.

He loved to tell the story of the time when he was complaining—boasting, really, in the guise of complaining, the way young men do—about how busy he was and how he didn't want to fly to Cincinnati to give again the speech he had just given in Chicago. And his friend and mentor Abraham Joshua Heschel said to him, "You think you're such a big shot, they know in Cincinnati what you said in Chicago? Go to Cincinnati, Richard."

FIRST THINGS

That was back in his radical 1960s days, of course, when he was the Lutheran pastor of a large, mostly black congregation in Brooklyn and, together with Rabbi Heschel and Fr. Daniel Berrigan, had founded one of the largest antiwar groups, Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam. He was a friend of Martin Luther King Jr., a McCarthy delegate to the 1968 Democratic convention, and a radical candidate for Congress in 1974. He was also, in those days, the author of an essay called "The Thorough Revolutionary," which proclaimed: "A revolution of consciousness, no doubt. A cultural revolution, certainly. A non-violent revolution, perhaps. An armed overthrow of the existing order, it may be necessary. Revolution for the hell of it or revolution for a new world, but revolution, Yes."

He could always turn a phrase, couldn't he? But it's a long way from there to being the Catholic priest of whom, on all the life issues, George W. Bush would say, "Father Richard helps me articulate these things." This journey from left to right has become the received account of Fr. Neuhaus's life: the narrative you can read in all the obituaries over the last few days, the problem of his biography that so many commentators have set themselves to explain since he died on January 8.

But in his autobiography—the internal narrative by which he understood himself—Richard John Neuhaus didn't think he had changed all that much. Oh, "The Thorough Revolutionary" embarrassed him a little, and the loss of his friends on the left hurt him a lot. But, generally, he imagined that the world had done more changing than he had.

Take abortion, for instance. In 1968, he won the award for best editorial of the year from the Catholic Press Association—Catholics liked giving awards to a Lutheran in those days; they thought of it as being bravely trendy and ecumenical—for an essay in which he cried, "The pro-abortion flag is being planted on the wrong side of the liberal/conservative divide." It ought to be those heartless conservatives who want to define the fetus as a meaningless lump of tissue; it ought to be caring liberals who want to expand the community of care to embrace the unborn.

If he later came to have a kinder view of conservatives, that was because he finally met some of them. But the pattern established by abortion continued through to his death. His work in founding the communi-

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tarian movement in 1977 came not because he thought he had changed but because he thought the United States was abandoning its commitment to families and all the voluntary associations that Tocqueville observed as a defining part of a liberal republic. He wrote his most famous book, *The Naked Public Square*—his 1984 argument against the attempt to secularize every part of shared life—because he thought the nation was in danger of losing the religious dynamism that had fueled everything from Abraham Lincoln's speeches to Martin Luther King's protests.

Even his conversion to Catholicism in 1990, and his ordination as a Catholic priest the next year, could be understood as a standing-still while the world altered around him. This was a man, after all, who titled his account of conversion "How I Became the Catholic That I Was."

Still, all such pilgrimages have costs, and one of the great things about Fr. Neuhaus was that he was always willing to pay them. His mind was a grown-up mind, and when he decided on a position, he advanced it with the same rhetorical power and energy with which he had advanced his earlier positions.

I remember him, sitting on the couch, taking me through the argument of a book he had just finished reading—and making the argument clearer than the author had ever managed. I remember his puffing on his cigars, and his constant jaywalking across the streets of Manhattan in utter confidence that the cars would stop, and his Lutheran-style preaching, and his bad coffee. I remember the way he would tilt his head when he smiled, and the way he used his hands when he talked, and the brilliant conversation about a book only a month back.

Only a month. But in that time, for those who knew him, the world has been inverted. Present still are all the noise and bustle of New York, the work in the office, the ringing phones, the demands for attention. But they all seem weak and gray and ghostly. Only his absence now is real. ♦

The Fight Over Flight 93

Will the memorial ever be built?

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

On December 9, the Families of Flight 93 group sent a letter to President Bush. Progress on the national Flight 93 memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, had stalled, and the families were seeking the president's help: They requested that he seize, by executive order, a parcel of private land needed for the memorial. It was a sudden move, but the fight among the families, the landowner, and the National Park Service has been brewing for years.

> The statute creating the permanent memorial explicitly forbade the use of eminent domain by the federal government. Neither county officials nor state officials seem likely to intervene. Which is why the Families petitioned the president to seize Svonavec's land.

On September 11, 2001, Flight 93 crashed on a plot of land owned by Mike Svonavec, who runs a small, family-owned rock quarry in nearby New Centerville. Soon after 9/11, an impromptu memorial to the heroes of Flight 93 appeared several hundred yards away from the crash site, next to the nearest road. This temporary memorial—which grew over time and now attracts about 130,000 visitors a year—was also on land owned by Svonavec, who later signed a licensing agreement with the National Park Service, allowing them to staff and operate the site. In 2002, Congress passed the Flight 93 National Memorial Act, calling on the Park Service to create a large-scale, permanent memorial.

In 2005, the Flight 93 Memorial Task Force announced that the memorial, then titled "Crescent of Embrace," would be a 1,300-acre, landscaped park, engulfing the crash site and much of the surrounding area, including all 273 acres of Svonavec's land. (The memorial design was later rejiggered to turn the crescent into a circle, with the park spreading to 2,231 acres.) The projected budget for the memorial was $44.7 million, not counting an estimated $10 million in land-acquisition costs. All of the necessary land was owned by private parties.

Relations between Svonavec and the Park Service deteriorated. After 9/11, the federal government provided funding to the local sheriff's office to pay for round-the-clock security at the temporary memorial. In March 2007, that funding expired and Svonavec began paying a private security firm to watch the site. It cost $10,000 a month. In June, Svonavec placed a donation box by the temporary memorial to help defray the security expense. The Park Service took exception, claiming the box violated the terms of their agreement. They removed it after a few days; the state of Pennsylvania then agreed to pay for security through 2009.

Meanwhile, the Families of Flight 93 had taken the lead on rounding up land for the permanent memo-

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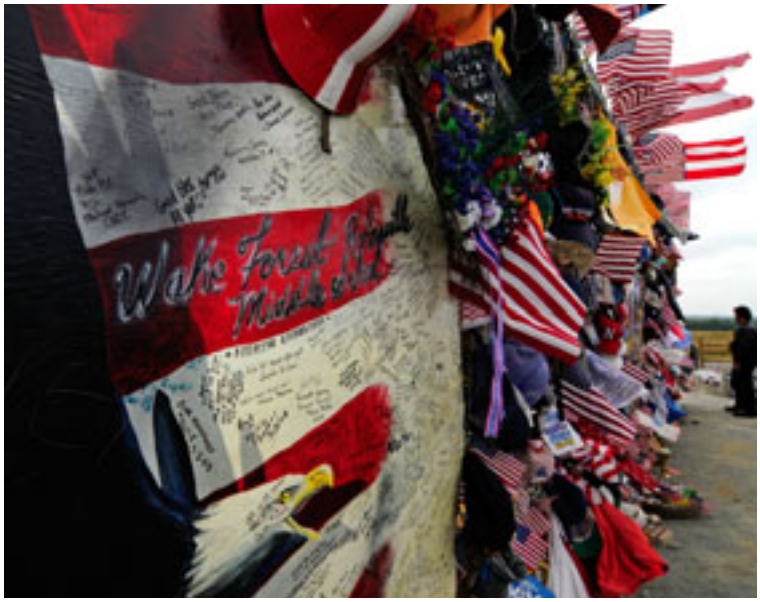
rial. Using a reserve of donations, the group purchased a parcel of 55.4 acres for $125,000 and transferred it to the Park Service. The Families approached other landowners, as well. They bought a 3-acre parcel, which included a home, for $112,000 and a 711-acre parcel from PBS Coals Inc. for $2.32 million. Each of these was in turn signed over to the Park Service. By working with the Families and the state Game Commission, the NPS now has access to approximately 1,300 acres, with 500 acres identified for future easements. All of the deals were amicably done, with the average price (discounting the house) being in the neighborhood of $3,000 per acre.

Svonavec's 273 acres are the last important piece of land, but dealings with Svonavec have not been as smooth. In June 2007, the Families went public, claiming that negotiations broke down after Svonavec demanded $10 million, the whole of the federally allocated land-acquisition money. Initially, Svonavec did not deny the charge. He told the local paper, the *Tribune-Democrat*, "These discussions we had privately—irregardless of what numbers were thrown around. That's what they were, private."

But Svonavec's position evolved. He declared that he would negotiate only with the Park Service and later denied that he had ever asked for $10 million. He insisted that he wasn't holding out—that he was willing to sell to the government, but that the Park Service hadn't yet made him an offer. (Svonavec also maintained that he would never accept money for the actual crash site, which he would eventually donate.)

For its part, the Park Service seems to have made little progress with Svonavec. According to the *Tribune-Democrat*, it contracted an independent appraisal of Svonavec's property in 2005. The appraisal was rejected by the agency and never publicly released. In February 2006, the Park Service informed Svonavec that it has conducted its own appraisal of his land, pegging the value at $250,000, or $915 an acre. (In 2007, the Families offered Svonavec $550,000 plus $200,000 for expenses, which he allegedly rejected before talks broke down.)



The temporary memorial

In March 2008, the Park Service hired a new outside contractor to perform another appraisal. The government rejected this appraisal, too, and also kept it from public view.

In October, Svonavec requested that the Park Service release the results of the two independent appraisals, but it refused. The Park Service now says that a third independent appraisal is in the works, but will not comment on when it will be finished or whether or not it will be made public.

In the midst of all this, Svonavec exercised some of his leverage. In July, he invoked a clause to terminate the Park Service's license to operate the temporary memorial. Svonavec claimed that he merely wanted out of the agreement and was happy to let the NPS stay. The Park Service insisted that it would not operate on private property without a license. Shortly after Svonavec opted out of the agreement, the Park Service packed up the temporary memorial and moved it to an adjacent site, on land acquired by the Families.

It's unclear how, or when, the dispute will be resolved. The statute creating the permanent memorial explicitly forbade the use of eminent domain by the federal government, but last year Senators Arlen Specter and Bob Casey Jr. sponsored an amendment which opens the door to federal action. County officials have said that they will not become involved in a taking, and the state government seems likely to take the same position. Which is why the Families petitioned the president to seize Svonavec's land.

Momentum for the gargantuan memorial has slowed. Private fundraising has been weaker than expected. Construction was originally planned to begin in 2007, with the whole memorial to be completed in 2011. As deadlines passed, that schedule was replaced with a phased rollout. The new timetable calls for building the small center of the memorial, the "Sacred Ground" at the crash site, by 2011. The rest of the park, including the main bowl, the tower of wind chimes, the visitor center, the "healing wetlands," and much else, is to be completed in phases at later dates, yet to be determined.

But even this scaled-back schedule supposes that all property acquisitions are completed by June 2009. Yet the combination of so many moving parts—an ambitious design-by-committee, layers of bureaucracy, multiple owners—make even the first, small phase seem a distant hope. That and the sense one gets that Svonavec and the Park Service could continue their dance for a good long time. ♦

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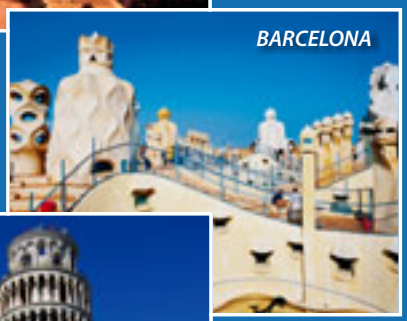

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A New Circus Comes to Town

They're going to need more than three rings

By P.J. O'Rourke

Is it too soon to talk about the failed Obama presidency just because Obama isn't president yet? That depends upon how quickly Barack Obama is able to apply the lessons he's learned from *Management Secrets of the Illinois Governors*. So far he's not doing very well. He has allowed America's current number one jackleg, crackpot, smut-mouth, slime-licking politician to give the Obama Senate seat to a lovable old African-American doofus whom no one has the heart to execrate. Roland Burris will be the kind of ornament to this year's Senate that the broken plastic Rudolph with its antlers missing was to last year's Christmas tree.

Then Obama took Bill Richardson—one of his earliest important supporters and among the smartest, most experienced, and, certainly, most affable of Washington insiders—and put Bill at the Department of Commerce. I will read from the roster at the Secretary of Commerce Hall of Fame, its inductees dating back to the Harding administration:

Norman Mineta
Mickey Kantor
Ron Brown
Robert Mosbacher
Howard Malcolm Baldrige Jr.
Philip Morris Klutznick
Maurice Stans
Henry Wallace
Harry Hopkins
Herbert Hoover

Even a Blagojevich knows that Washington isn't Chicago. In Washington you don't place a loyal and able political ally in some obscure public office to garner campaign contribution boodle from local highway contractors. And—oops, that seems to have been the problem with the Bill Richardson nomination.

P.J. O'Rourke is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

Come on, Obama, what kind of Democrat are you? I thought Democrats were supposed to be good at this stuff. It's us Republicans who stink at political corruption. One clumsy little elephant misstep and it's *GOPterdämmerung* with villainy that lives on in popular legend for generations—McCarthyism, Watergate, Iran-Contra, Enron, Jack Abramoff. But when Democrats get their hand (or other body part) caught in the till, folk heroes ensue—Boston's James Curley being reelected while jailed, Washington's Marion Barry being jailed while elected, Quixotic Bill Clinton unfazed by the Rush Limbaugh windmill and riding off into the sunset with fair Dulcinea Lewinsky unceremoniously dumped from the saddle. And, of course, there's Obama's Toddling Town, the Windy City of Richard and Richie Daley with its "corruption that works."

So what's the big deal about Bill Richardson and the highway contractors? You want those highway contractors making their Democratic presidential contributions during the primary campaigns of 2012 when the "failed Obama presidency" is being challenged at the polls by Hillary Clinton?

Speaking of "witch," am I the only person who experienced an unexpected surge of warm fellow-feeling for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad when Hillary was named secretary of state? I wouldn't wish dealing with her on my worst enemy, who'd be Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

I think about the next four years of Hillary's dutiful efforts at global peacemaking, and I hear a chorus of voices echoing around the world—from Israelis and Palestinians, Iraqis and al Qaeda, Taliban and NATO troops, Pakistanis and Indians, Sri Lankans and Tamil Tigers, Georgians and South Ossetians, Colombian soldiers and FARC guerrillas, Hutus and Tutsis, Congolese rebels and other Congolese rebels—all saying, "Thanks, but we'd rather be killed by each other than nagged to death by you."

Mr. future ex-President Obama, if I may address you personally, let's discuss your laundry list of hope and change. In your opinion how often is change really a good thing? Changing a tire. "You'd better change your ways." Change of life. "Spare change, Man?" Any change in a wart or mole.

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If change came in a box, what kind of box would it come in? You've read your Bulfinch's. After Pandora opens her container (made of recycled material so that death and disease leave a small carbon footprint) and all the evils that plague mankind have been loosed on the world, what's left inside? Do you think it's a good sign when nothing remains but hope? What would your girls have liked best for Christmas? A kennel with a puppy? Or a carton full of empty promises?

In the language of politics there is only one translation for the phrase "hope and change," to wit, "big, fat government." Mr. Obama, if you're going to give us big, fat government, you need to be a big, fat politician. You need to be a Tip O'Neill, a Teddy Kennedy, a Richard Daley, a Bill Clinton at the very least. And you don't seem to be a big, fat anything—literally or otherwise. You seem to be . . . smart and organized. Like Jimmy Carter!

So we may speak without compunction of the failed Obama presidency. What a blessing that it's a failure. Things are bad enough the way they are. There's already a huge ongoing government intervention in the economy. Bringing the government in to run Wall Street is like saying, "Dad burned dinner, let's get the dog to cook." Now the government's going to take over the auto industry. I can predict the result—a light-weight, compact, sustainable vehicle using alternative energy. When I was a kid we called it a Schwinn. And next in line for political therapy is health care. Voting will cure what ails you. Go to the doctor when you've got cancer, and he'll say, "Don't worry. Everything will be fine. I'm going to treat your disease by going inside this small, curtained booth and putting an 'X' next to a very special name."

If we want this sort of thing and lots more of it, we'll need somebody better—that is to say worse—than Barack Obama. Is Obama the man who can make the wolf of partisan spoils dwell with the lamb of public interest, and the leopard of increased political power lie down with the kid of individual liberty; and the calf of personal responsibility and the young lion of social engineering and the fatling of free enterprise together; and a lawyer from Hyde Park will lead them? (And will Nancy Pelosi eat straw like Dennis Kucinich?)

No. Barack Obama doesn't have the outsized personality and flair for bunkum that is necessary to lead even America's sheep-like electorate into such ravenous company. Thank God.

Barack Obama is not a P.T. Barnum of the Washington Big Top. The real P.T. Barnum had a side-show attraction where a lamb, a wolf, a leopard, and a lion had been trained to stay with each other in one cage. Asked if this was difficult Barnum said, "No. But every now and then we have to get a new lamb." ♦

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The Stimulus Trap

And how to avoid it

By Matthew Continetti

Pretty much everybody seems to agree that the economy needs stimulating. They agree on this because the United States has been in recession for more than a year and the outlook is bleak. There aren't a lot of options left to policymakers. In most recessions, the Federal Reserve increases demand by manipulating interest rates. But, in December, the Fed effectively lowered those rates to zero and lost a lot of its leverage over the economy. The nation's central bank now has to rely on other forms of monetary policy—mostly printing money—in order to help the United States pull out of recession. But that might not be enough.

By keeping interest rates so low for so long over the past decade, then lowering them some more after the recession hit, the Federal Reserve stumbled into a "liquidity trap." You get caught in a liquidity trap when monetary policy loses its effectiveness even though interest rates are at zero—just like today. It's as though the Fed has been dancing the limbo and has finally reached its limit. Rates can't go any lower to get money moving. The central bank has done all that it can do.

During the 20th century, two countries fell into a liquidity trap: the United States during the Great Depression and Japan in its "Lost Decade" of the 1990s. These examples aren't exactly reassuring. In each case the economic doldrums lasted a long time. No single policy seemed to have any real traction. How did they finally escape the trap? No one is really sure. There's still a debate over it.

We do know that, off and on, the leaders of Depression America and Lost Decade Japan tried to follow the Keynesian model of how to fight a recession. The model says that when monetary policy is no longer effective, the government's only remaining tool is fiscal policy. You dig your way out of a liquidity trap through deficit spending. Another word for deficit spending is "stimulus." This is the thing that everybody suddenly likes.

Should they? In early 2008 Congress passed and President Bush signed a $150 billion stimulus package that included tax rebates and some additional spending. By late spring most taxpayers had received a check. Many of them saved the money or used it to pay down soaring personal debt. The macroeconomic benefits were negligible. The best you can say about the 2008 stimulus bill is that it didn't make things any worse. But that is not necessarily true of all stimulus bills.

Deficit spending comes in two forms. The government can borrow huge amounts of money for public projects and redistribute income from taxpayers and creditors directly to others in the hopes of increasing overall spending—what economists call "aggregate demand." Or it can slash tax rates in the hopes that deficit-financed lower taxes will increase overall spending by spurring private investment and consumption. (Deficit-financed tax cuts are a form of spending because the interest on the debt accrued as a result of the tax cuts has to be financed and repaid just like any other spending program.)

Ideally the government combines the two approaches and sustains the deficits until the economy grows again. This is how Reagan fought the recession of the early 1980s. He coupled a massive reduction in marginal tax rates with a huge increase in public spending for national defense. And he had help. At that time the Federal Reserve had plenty of room to spur growth through lower interest rates.

The trick is getting both elements of the stimulus right. Higher spending and higher taxes doesn't work. Lower spending and lower taxes is a political nonstarter. The compromise is higher spending and lower taxes. This satisfies both political persuasions. Conservatives tend to favor tax cuts. Liberals tend to favor spending programs. Both agree that the deficit can grow in order for the economy to escape recession and avoid depression.

But it's the Democrats who are about to run Washing-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JASON SEILER

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ton. Hence the talk these days is of a massive stimulus package that could reach close to $1 trillion in new spending and tax reductions. The direct spending probably will be divided into aid to state governments, funds for infrastructure projects, and subsidies for green technologies and initiatives such as insulating homes and—I am not making this up—helping you change light bulbs.

At this writing, the Obama plan includes $300 billion in tax breaks. The bulk of these cuts (about half) fall under Obama's "middle class tax cut" pledge from the campaign. This is unlikely to help the economy a great deal. For one thing, it is not really a tax cut. It's a refundable payroll tax *credit* of around $500 for individuals making less than $75,000 a year, and $1,000 for couples making less than $150,000 a year. Reports are that a partial credit will be made available to individuals making between $75,000 and $85,000, and couples making between $150,000 and $175,000.

There is a real role for conservatives to play in the debate over the stimulus. Who else will point out that the Obama administration is about to follow the Federal Reserve into a dead end?

Right now, it seems that payroll taxpayers won't get a check in the mail. The credit may be applied retroactively and reflected in your paycheck. In effect, it's something of a short-term pay raise, courtesy of Obama. But, in a larger sense, the payroll credit plan is similar to the 2008 stimulus. It's not a permanent cut in the payroll tax, so the credit is unlikely to change long-term hiring and wage incentives. People are likely to save the rebate or use it to pay down personal debt. The "cut" is too small. Pretty thin gruel. The good news is that there are some pro-business tax provisions in the Obama plan, including credits for new jobs, accelerated depreciation, and an accounting trick that allows companies to apply this year's losses to yesteryear's tax liabilities. And, to its eternal credit, the Obama team is reluctant to raise taxes in the middle of a recession. Keynes would be pleased.

Conservatives would prefer that some of the money be spent on defense and would rather the tax cuts be deep, broad, and permanent. But no one really listens to us anymore. Hence the temptation facing conservatives is to be overly critical rather than constructive. Obstructionist rather than meliorist. Yet there is a real role for conservatives to play in the coming debate over the economic stimulus package. Who else will point out that the Obama plan, as currently conceived, is unlikely to work? That the new administration is about to follow the Federal Reserve into a dead end? Conservatives can warn Obama that he's about to walk right into the stimulus trap.

What is the stimulus trap? It's what you fall into when you forget that the secret to Keynesian stimulus is a combination of increasing expenditure (public spending) and decreasing revenue (tax cuts). A review of economic history suggests that relying on public spending alone won't get you out of the ditch. It may even make things worse. That's because spending creates a political environment in which interests clamor loudly to raise revenue in order to reduce the growing budget deficit.

And where does the additional revenue come from? From tax hikes and increased tariffs and other measures that delay any recovery. This doesn't matter to the deficit hawks. To them, the huge deficits are too scary. They haven't yet seen the gains from public spending on things like infrastructure (because those gains take a while to materialize). The deficit hawks have the natural human tendency in times of economic distress: Batten down the hatches and hope the house survives the storm. They forget that what is good behavior for people is not always good for governments.

But they have pull. And politicians are always happy to raise more money to spend. So taxes go up. Budgets are cut. The economy slides back into recession. The stimulus trap has been sprung.

It's happened before. The federal government expanded considerably during the Great Depression. Total government purchases of goods and services grew from $13.6 billion in 1929 to $22.8 billion in 1939. The decade saw the creation of the programs and agencies that liberals hold up as models for the Obama administration: the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Civil Works Administration, etc. FDR's government, to use the latest cliché, "put people to work" digging ditches, building roads, fixing public spaces, and electrifying rural communities.

There was only one problem. It didn't help. The economy remained in depression until 1942 and the onset of wartime spending. Why did fiscal policy have so few noticeable effects? Because FDR was ensnared in the stimulus trap. Unlike today's Democrats, he actually believed in pay-as-you-go budgeting. He thought that what the government appropriated needed to be recouped in taxpayer revenue. And he was partly right. During prosperous times government has a responsibility to balance its books. But not in

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times of scarcity. Then the government's duty is to sow the seeds of growth.

Herbert Hoover had signed into law a sequence of tax increases in 1932—on estates, corporations, and incomes—and FDR built on his legacy. By the end of the decade the government had imposed taxes on agricultural goods and other commodities and had levied a fee on labor in the form of payroll taxes to fund Social Security. Indeed, every time the economy seemed to be getting better, taxes were raised and the economy regressed. The president who revolutionized the politics of redistribution in the United States got Keynes wrong. FDR relied solely on public expenditures to fight the Depression. And he didn't produce a sustained recovery.

The president had it in for the "economic royalists" and wasn't interested in the economic distortions that high taxes and direct subsidies produce. What he was interested in was income equality and durable political coalitions. Sound familiar?

The Japanese economy in the 1990s proved susceptible to the same maladies. A collapse in the real estate sector and a shaky financial system gave the Japanese year after year of economic contraction mixed with minuscule growth. Little the government did helped. First its central bank stepped into the liquidity trap. Soon thereafter its government fell into the stimulus trap.

The latest International Monetary Fund report on the current global financial crisis tells the tale (you can read it on the IMF website). By 1996, public spending had helped stir the Japanese economy into a recovery period. Thinking the worst was over and staring warily at some of the worst budget deficits in economic history, the Japanese promptly hiked consumption taxes and cut spending in order to pay for the earlier stimulus bills. The economy went back into recession. Then the government tried another stimulus package consisting of public spending and financial reform but no tax cuts. No go. "Despite these actions," writes the IMF, "little fundamental progress was made toward resolving banking problems while the recession continued." Entirely predictable. And entirely preventable. The Japanese had fallen into the stimulus trap—and couldn't get out.

Is Barack Obama about to make the same mistake? All signs point to yes. At the moment his stimulus plan, including the "middle class tax cut" that is really spending by another name, is mostly expenditure. He downplays revenue. He's only grasped one half of Keynes.

This isn't to say that Obama's plan is completely misguided. States need federal aid because their constitutions

force them to balance their budgets even during recessions. That means they cut spending and raise taxes exactly at the worst possible moment. They are constitutionally bound to get caught in the stimulus trap—minus the stimulus.

It's also hard to get worked up over additional spending on roads, bridges, tunnels, and runways. These are public goods. There ought to be more of them, and they ought to be maintained. Americans spend far too much time stuck in traffic and waiting on tarmacs. It's time wasted. A bet-

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ter infrastructure could spur productivity and therefore improve living standards. Hence criticism of Obama's infrastructure plan will probably center on process. And rightly so. Will the money go to state and local governments, who know best which projects to spend it on? Will the money be spent on pavement, which commuters need, and not on pie-in-the-sky mass transit projects that no one will ride? Those are the sorts of questions that deserve to be asked.

As for those parts of the stimulus bill that deal with energy and "green jobs," well, the jury hasn't yet reached a verdict. Maybe office buildings and homes will become more efficient as a result. That would reduce demand for energy and help push prices down. Not bad.

But there is also the considerable risk that Obama's energy program will be filled with subsidies, duties, and restrictions that will introduce economic distortions right when we least need them. Shoveling aid to domestic ethanol producers while doing nothing to eliminate restrictions on imported ethanol is bad economics, bad energy policy, and harms poor people in other countries by raising food prices. Other subsidies and duties might provoke retaliation from America's trading partners.

The trap is already set. If Obama wants to pursue a truly Keynsian stimulus, then he will have to exert real pull in order to delay the end of the Bush tax cuts. This won't be easy.

Obama says, "the drop in oil prices, I do think, makes the conversation about energy more difficult, not less necessary." Sorry, Mr. President-elect. The energy conversation is not only less necessary, it's superfluous. The drop in the oil price is the only good thing happening for consumers right now. In a way, it's a sort of tax cut. A recession is simply not the time to impose policies that will raise energy prices and thus the cost of doing business—especially when you have no corresponding plan to lower the cost of work. (See Charles Krauthammer's "Net-Zero Gas Tax" in The Weekly Standard of January 5 / January 12, 2009.)

As long as he doesn't raise taxes, however, Obama's stimulus plan isn't likely to do much harm. It may even spur some job creation. But let me pull a Joe Biden and say again: *as long as he doesn't raise taxes*. There's the rub. With its whopping price tag, the incoming administration's economic plan makes it more likely taxes will be raised sometime soon. And, if that happens, Obama will have failed his first test. He will have stepped into the stimulus trap.

Why does the price tag matter? Because the stimulus bill will add hundreds of billions, and possibly trillions, to a budget deficit that the Congressional Budget Office predicts will reach $1.2 trillion in 2009. Sure, for the moment, the consensus in Washington is that the economic crisis has rendered the deficit irrelevant. Economic recovery is more important. The onetime deficit hawks advising Obama have changed their minds. They are now willing to blow a hole in the deficit if it means America and the world can avoid economic calamity. On this point the Democrats all agree. They have adopted the mantra of someone who left their fold long ago: The deficit is big enough to take care of itself.

To hear the Democrats, then, you would think Obama has a free pass. He can implement a true Keynesian stimulus—big spending, tax cuts—until the economy is growing again. But just because the deficit is irrelevant now doesn't mean it won't matter in 2010, 2011, or 2012. It will.

The Republicans are still here, despite everything, and it is just a matter of time before they abandon their devil-may-care budgetary attitudes and become deficit hawks. They will oppose Obama, because the first duty of an opposition party is to oppose, and will therefore ratchet up the pressure on him to ease the public debt burden. And since the gains from his road-building bill probably won't be apparent by 2010, Obama might give in. What's more, he won't have to lift a finger. The Bush tax cuts are set to expire around that time anyway. The trap is already set. If he wants to pursue a truly Keynesian stimulus, then, Obama will have to exert real pull in order to delay the end of the Bush tax cuts. This won't be easy. He'll face criticism from deficit hawks on the right and tax-and-spenders on the left. But it has to be done. Otherwise his plan will fail.

"If Obama looks like he's throwing money at the wall," writes GOP consultant Patrick Ruffini, "and undermining his own promise to build a green economy to boot—there is ample opportunity to reclaim the mantle of sane governance and fiscal responsibility." The Republicans, in other words, could ride the deficit to gains in the midterm elections. Sounds like good politics for the GOP. But the economy? It would be left in the lurch.

So budget politics could force Obama into the stimulus trap. But he could just as easily walk into it by himself. That's because our incoming president, like FDR, has an ideological predilection toward higher taxes. He says higher taxes on upper incomes are a matter of fairness. The vice-president-to-be says high taxes are a matter of patriotism. Obama ran on tax increases on upper incomes, on capital gains, on estates, on dividends, and on payrolls by raising the ceiling on wages subject to tax. He suffered no political penalty for supporting such increases. It wasn't a hindrance.

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He won with the largest share of the vote since George H.W. Bush in 1988.

Obama supports higher taxes on moral grounds. He's immune to arguments in favor of tax cuts on economic grounds. The most famous example of this occurred during an ABC News debate in April 2008. Anchor Charlie Gibson asked Obama why he supported increasing the capital gains tax when, the last two times the tax was cut, the government took in more money with the lower rate. Obama appeared stymied. (This doesn't happen often.) He and Gibson went back and forth, but Obama never gave in. He said he would raise the rate, regardless of revenue, "for purposes of fairness." Who decides what's fair? You know who.

With these sorts of instincts, it's not only amazing that Obama has put off repealing the Bush tax cuts in 2009 and includes some tax breaks in his economic plan. It's a sign that he recognizes the depth of the economic problems facing America and the world. But he hasn't gone far enough. Rather than delaying his tax increases, Obama should be saying he won't raise taxes as long as the economy is in recession. But those words have not crossed his lips.

The danger is that, pushed into a corner next year by a coalition of deficit-griping Blue Dog Democrats and Republicans, Obama will give in. He will say, "You want to lower the deficit? Well, you got it!" He'll allow the Bush tax cuts to expire. He'll levy some more taxes of his own. And the steel jaws of the stimulus trap will ensnare the economy.

Obama wants to be another FDR. He might get his wish.

But there's another option. While the stimulus trap is set, it can be avoided with some of the "pragmatism" that Obama says he admires.

Once again history provides some clues. The tendency of economies is to grow. Obama's own economic advisers have argued that, during the Depression, the U.S. economy was still able to make great strides, recouping almost all of its strength before World War II. Recovery might have come sooner had Roosevelt reduced the tax burden and the cost of doing business. He didn't. Thus the economy had to rely instead on slow, steady monetary expansion and, eventually, the gargantuan deficit spending occasioned by World War II.

Is this a model for Obama? Not really. A geoeconomic depression was replaced by a geopolitical calamity. It was a genuine global emergency. There was a draft. The government imposed rationing. Government spending reached 42 percent of the country's gross domestic product—more than twice its share today. Deficits as a percentage of GDP reached astronomical heights. Perhaps that was the amount of deficit spending needed to end the Depression. Even so, no one would be willing to accept similar interventions in the economy in 2009. Nor would anyone think of proposing such interventions.

Japan offers a more positive example. In 1998, Japan increased capital injections into its banking system and nationalized two of its largest financial institutions. This finally got the financial sector going again and increased lending to businesses and consumers. Then, in November 1998, the Japanese passed a major economic recovery program that included deep and permanent cuts in individual and business taxes as well as public spending. The result was growth. By lowering tax rates, and

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by keeping them low, the Japanese finally escaped the stimulus trap.

Let's not pretend that Congress is going to pass, or Obama will propose or accept, an across-the-board permanent tax cut anytime soon. And let's not expect Obama to abandon his economic stimulus proposals—even if those proposals make it more likely he'll fall into the stimulus trap. Instead let's be realistic. Here are two things Obama can do to navigate the minefield in front of him:

A No-New-Taxes-Right-Now Pledge. The first thing he can do is pledge not to raise taxes on income, capital, or labor until the economy has experienced two consecutive years of growth. Why two? Because governments in the past, thinking a crisis has abated, have raised taxes too soon and sent the economy back into recession. One election cycle ought to be enough to see whether the economic recovery seems durable. Let's hope so.

Including health care and education in a stimulus package guarantees opposition. The solution? Confine the stimulus bill to tangible objects like boots, guns, asphalt, and bullet trains. The schools and hospitals can wait.

The beauty of this pledge is that it allows Obama to eat his cake and have it too. He can still repeal the Bush tax cuts and address equity and fairness. All in good time. More important, he can oversee an economic recovery. The pledge simply requires Obama to acknowledge that the recovery must come first. Without the recovery, it's entirely possible Obama will be a one-term president.

You'll note that consumption taxes are absent from the pledge. This is where the realism comes in. A consumption tax is Obama's out. If the deficit hawks are rapacious, he can try to appease them by raising taxes on alcohol, cigarettes, and the like. Yes, it's better not to raise taxes at all. But, if one must raise taxes, then one ought to try to raise them on consumption and not on labor and capital. And if Obama does go for a consumption tax hike, conservatives will be in a good position to argue along the lines of a dollar-for-dollar cut in the payroll tax.

A No-New-Taxes-for-Now Pledge also allows Obama to avoid the trap set by the expiring Bush tax cuts. He can continue to delay their repeal until the economy is growing again. Instead of a vote for early repeal or for making the changes permanent, Congress can vote annually to extend the cuts. That way Republicans get low tax rates, the country gets an economy on the path toward renewal, and Democrats still get the chance to eliminate Bush's tax legacy one day in the future. Everyone's happy.

The Hamilton Test. The second thing Obama can do is ensure that his public spending proposals pass the Hamilton test. Alexander Hamilton had no problem with government interventions in the economy if they meant a stronger America. Hence the aim of a Hamiltonian stimulus program would be to foster American strength through what used to be called internal improvements. If you are going to spend public dollars to boost aggregate demand, you might as well do it on public goods.

The place to start is national defense. Obama says he supports increasing the size of the Army and Marine Corps. Hold him to his pledge. He can spend money to recruit more soldiers, improve soldiers' pay and retention, and improve veterans' health care. Then he can begin repairing military inventory: tanks, jeeps, MRAPs, helicopters, ships, fighters, bombers. And when he signs the bill appropriating money for those projects, Obama will be able to note that the factories building American arms provide jobs for American workers. Thanks to him we'll have a bigger, better equipped military, and more people at work.

We're sure to see additional infrastructure spending. Fine. The question is whether or not the spending projects pass the Hamilton test. Does a project improve America's competitive edge in the global economy? Does it increase mobility and productivity? Or is it a drain on national resources for the benefit of a local few? The Interstate Highway System would pass the Hamilton test. The Bridge to Nowhere would not.

Of course, the trouble with spending money on public goods is that everyone has a different idea of what a public good is. Some people like F-16s, others highways, still others more schools and more spending on children's health care. When you open up the floodgates of public money, pretty soon everybody and their mother is trying to jump in. And to make things even more complicated, Hamilton's categories of national strength—military and economic power—are fairly elastic. For example, one could argue that a healthier, better educated population increases America's economic strength.

But this introduces a problem. Such arguments are political. They invite disagreement. If Obama includes health care and education spending in his stimulus package, as it looks like he might, he guarantees opposition from Repub-

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licans. He makes it easier for them to oppose the bill and, down the road, force him into the stimulus trap.

The solution? Confine the stimulus bill to hard power. That means tangible objects like boots, guns, asphalt, and bullet trains. The soft power stuff, the schools and hospitals, can wait. They should have their own legislation. This would increase the chances the stimulus bill will pass and help foster growth. And it would leave the conflict over education and health care for another day.

It's a tricky moment. The capital is in transition. No one knows how long the global downturn will last. Policies that might have made sense during the election no longer apply. The Federal Reserve has exhausted the main weapon with which it has fought past recessions. It's in the liquidity trap. And the incoming president is politically and ideologically inclined to step right into the stimulus trap and prolong the economic suffering. Even more uncertain are the challenges that await. After all, global downturns have this nasty habit of turning into global showdowns.

The new political realities dictate that compromise, not confrontation, is the way forward. At least where the economy is concerned. At least for now. So, to that end, conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, need to recognize that they may have to accept things that they do not like in order for the economy to return to normal. For conservatives and Republicans that means accepting a level of government intervention in the economy that would normally make them blanch. For liberals and Democrats that means accepting the fact that raising taxes in the middle of a recession is the worst possible intervention a government can make. For budget-hawks that means living, at least for the time being, with a federal deficit substantially higher than they would usually tolerate.

If we are able to make such compromises, then growth will return sooner rather than later. If not, then not. Policymakers will be left with even fewer options than they have already. They will be trapped on monetary policy. They will be trapped on fiscal policy. And the crisis will endure.

It's up to our next president. If he doesn't raise taxes, if he's sensible about how he spends the people's money, he can put this bad spell behind us and embark on the rest of his agenda. He can lay the foundations for growth and prepare to tackle the structural problems that put the global economy at risk in the first place. *If* he plays his cards right. Then he can skip right over the stimulus trap. ♦

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The New Deal Metaphor

It's faulty, misleading, and dangerous—
and a surprising number of Democrats are embracing it.

By James Piereson

Much as generals make the mistake of fighting the last war, politicians are prone to recycle old nostrums that were previously successful in getting us (and them) out of one crisis or another. For liberal Democrats, this typically involves the dream of replaying the New Deal and FDR's first 100 days. So strong is the hold of the New Deal over the liberal imagination that few stop to consider how different the world is today from the one Roosevelt faced when he took office in 1933 at the very bottom of the Great Depression.

It was to be expected that following Barack Obama's election there would be a flurry of calls from liberal pundits and Democrats in Congress for another New Deal, one even more ambitious than that FDR engineered. The president-elect has been called "Franklin Delano Obama" by one influential columnist who wrote that the problem with Roosevelt's New Deal was that it was too timid and lacking in vision. A recent issue of *Time* magazine carried a photo of the president-elect on the cover wearing an FDR-style top hat accompanied by an article drawing parallels between Roosevelt's leadership during the Depression and the opportunities now arrayed before Obama. Many are saying (with much relief) that the financial collapse combined with Democratic electoral sweeps marks the end of the Reagan-Thatcher era with its focus on free markets, open trade, and low taxes.

Neither the president-elect nor any of his close advisers has yet embraced the comparisons to FDR and the New Deal, perhaps for fear of creating expectations they cannot fulfill. He has, however, embraced the concept of an ambitious New Deal-type stimulus package that will include funds for public works programs, "clean" sources of energy, and other projects designed to stimulate consumer demand and create new jobs. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that "President-elect Obama is promising to intervene in the economy in ways that Washington hasn't tried since the 1970s, favoring some industries and products while hobbling others." It is sobering to recall that the policy experiments of the 1970s, which gave us a decade of alternating recession and inflation, were drawn from the lessons of the Depression and the New Deal. There is little reason to think that they will work any better today.

The New Deal metaphor in wide circulation today is based on the illusion that, since New Deal interventions were effective in dealing with the Depression, they are the right medicine for dealing with today's financial crisis and economic slowdown. This illusion is driven by a deep misconception: that the market-oriented policies of the past quarter century were a great mistake and should be replaced by a more coordinated set of policies that (it is argued) will yield more stable growth and a fairer distribution of income. Thus the New Deal metaphor is now invoked as a call to overturn the free-market revolution of the 1980s, just as the New Deal threw overboard the Wall Street-favored policies of the 1920s. Such hopes are based on a fairy tale version of the New Deal and a highly ideological interpretation of recent history. In combination, they provide a shaky foundation for current policy and are a trap for Democrats.

Much in contrast to President-elect Obama, who will enter office in the midst of a recession, FDR came into office in 1933 at the very bottom of the worst economic calamity in American history. The New Deal was erected in an unprecedented circumstance when the American economy had come to a near standstill. Between 1929 and 1933, unemployment rose from 4 to 25 percent of the work force, national output fell by more than

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Unemployed workers in Childersburg, Alabama, 1941

30 percent, the dollar value of U.S. exports fell by more than two-thirds, the stock market dropped close to 90 percent, and more than a third of the nation's banks failed. The Great Depression, as it came to be called to distinguish it from the mini-depressions of the 1870s and 1890s, was a catastrophe on a scale far beyond what anyone previously thought was possible. No one knew what to do about it, certainly not FDR who had campaigned on a platform calling for a balanced budget. When he took office, things were about as bad as they could possibly get, and there was little reason to worry about what today we would call "downside risk." Thus, Roosevelt took an experimental approach to the crisis, adopting various policies (many of them contradictory) in the hope that some might reverse the slide.

He also had more room to maneuver than is the case with policymakers today, operating as he did in an environment in which the federal government spent (in 1932) only about 3 percent of GDP (it's 20 percent today). The economic collapse had removed the traditional political restraints on federal spending, there were no social programs to speak of, and international factors of trade and exchange rates did not significantly restrict choices. There was thus much room to increase federal spending, and, by blaming the rich for the catastrophe, FDR had a justification for raising their taxes. At that time, however, the federal government did not command a large enough share of the economy to "prime the pump" with Keynesian style deficits (that would come later). Since most workers were employed on farms or in factories, they could be diverted in a time of high unemployment to public works programs to build roads, bridges, and schools. FDR did not have to worry about putting back to work hordes of unemployed investment bankers, lawyers, or accountants. Any public works program proposed today on the model of Roosevelt's WPA would have to be tailored to the characteristics of the unemployed in a service economy and to the objections of public sector unions that hardly existed at all in the 1930s.

Some of the most constructive and long-lasting features of the New Deal are those that today's would-be reformers ignore when calculating its achievements—most particularly, the broad financial reforms that FDR engineered during his first 100 days. FDR moved quickly in 1933 to address the failures in the financial system that were obvious sources of the continuing deflation and downward spiral in the economy, immediately declaring a bank "holiday" (to stop bank panics) and removing the United States from the gold standard to free the Federal Reserve from its deflationary restrictions. In short order, Congress approved a series of reforms that created a system of deposit insurance, brought more banks under the supervision of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve, established standards of transparency in the public sale of securities, and built the wall of separation between commercial and investment banks (in part to curtail the speculation with bank deposits that many saw as a cause of bank failures). In combination, these measures stopped the slide and reestablished the banking system on stronger and more stable foundations. Most continue to function today as pillars of the financial system (save for the

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split between commercial and investment banks which was repealed in 1999) and, indeed, they have been called into action recently to deal with the current financial crisis.

At the same time, many of the New Deal measures most favored by reformers today were either unhelpful or counterproductive in addressing the economic crisis. FDR's farm programs, designed to raise prices by cutting agricultural production, may have helped some farmers, but they did not promote farm exports nor did they help consumers with tight family budgets. In a misguided effort to raise prices, New Deal functionaries destroyed meat and produce and took cropland out of production even as hungry Americans stood in bread lines. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), designed to bring unions and corporations together to set prices, production levels, and working conditions, proved to be a bureaucratic tangle as businessmen tried to use it to guarantee profits, unions to drive up wages, and government officials to expand public power. Through its complex codes, NIRA succeeded not only in raising prices—a dubious achievement—but also in sowing confusion throughout the economy as to what business practices were and were not permitted. It was soon declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and never revived.

The pillars of the so-called Second New Deal (the Social Security Act, the National Labor Relations Act, and the Revenue Act of 1935) added new burdens to business in the form of payroll taxes, higher corporate taxes, and collective bargaining for labor unions. Whatever their long-term benefits, these measures did not improve the climate for investment and job creation in the 1930s. The NLRA, predictably, led to greater union organization and to a spike in industrial strikes. The passage of these measures was accompanied by a good deal of anti-business rhetoric, which was not helpful either. Indeed, the Revenue Act, because it raised the highest marginal tax rate to 78 percent, was sometimes called the "soak the rich tax." When a severe recession followed in 1937 and 1938 that sent the unemployment rate from 14 percent to 19 percent, FDR attributed the crisis to a "capital strike" engineered by business leaders exercising "monopoly power." Such demagoguery may have succeeded as a political strategy in deflecting blame from the administration to the business community, but it failed miserably as an approach to economic growth, as Amity Shlaes argued in *The Forgotten Man*, her fine history of the Depression era. Unemployment remained high throughout Roosevelt's second term, never going below 14 percent until 1941 when the nation began to mobilize for war.

The anti-business rhetoric of the New Dealers had its source in a misguided understanding of the causes of the Depression, which they located in industrial concentration and monopoly and overproduction of goods that drove down prices (the latter being the source of New Deal farm programs and the attempts to control supply) after the 1929 crash. Lurking behind all of these were the rich bankers and industrialists whose malefactions in the form of speculation and the abuse of monopoly power caused the entire system to collapse. None of these factors, as economists now agree, could have caused a collapse on the scale of the Depression, nor could they have accounted for the generalized deflation that had occurred. As for the market crash, by April of 1930 stocks had regained much of the value that had been lost in the meltdown of the previous October.

The real causes of the Depression, on the other hand, are highly instructive for today's problems. Though economists and historians still debate the subject, several interconnected factors appear to have combined to turn a serious stock market correction in late 1929 into a full-scale depression by 1932: (1) an ill-advised tariff policy passed by Congress in 1930 to protect U.S. manufacturers but which had the unintended effect of shutting down international trade and U.S. exports; (2) a monetary policy adopted by the Federal Reserve, which raised the discount rate and allowed the money supply to shrink through 1931 even as the economy faltered; and (3) a cascade of bank failures which wiped out savings and credit for large swaths of the economy. The economic collapse was thus accelerated by policy errors from Congress, and especially by financial authorities who stood by as money contracted and banks failed. Such lessons seem foremost in the minds of financial authorities today who seem determined to stop any parallel sequence of falling dominoes lest we repeat the experience of the 1930s.

Admirers of the New Deal point to the prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s as evidence that FDR's reforms, rather than undermining American capitalism, actually smoothed out its rough edges and permitted it to operate with greater efficiency. FDR himself claimed that his New Deal had saved market capitalism from its own inherent excesses. On October 14, 1936, during a campaign speech in Chicago, he responded to critics from the business community: "It was this administration which saved the system of private profit and free enterprise after it had been dragged to the brink of ruin by these same leaders who now try to scare you." That viewpoint was later developed by mainstream economists and historians, perhaps most cogently by John Kenneth Galbraith in a series of popular works. In *American Capitalism* (1952), *The Affluent Society* (1958), and *The New Industrial State* (1967), Galbraith argued that the New Deal put into place a modern economy in which large corporations and labor unions control markets and work with government to maintain demand for products and to set wages and prices. Such a system, he argued, was ordained by technological advances

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that required large business enterprises, which in turn had to be regulated by government in the public interest.

The corporatist ideal, along with the bipartisan foreign policy of the period, represented one of the pillars of the postwar consensus of the Eisenhower and Kennedy-Johnson eras. Conservative Republicans, operating outside this consensus, were sorely disappointed when, following his landslide election, Eisenhower maintained the essential contours of the New Deal. Richard Nixon also endorsed that consensus, proclaiming "We are all Keynesians now." In 1971, he removed the dollar from the international gold standard and slapped wage and price controls on the American economy in hopes of battling inflation. The consensus was finally shattered during the 1970s when the policy prescriptions of the New Deal—stimulus packages, loose money, job-training programs, corporate and governmental bailouts—failed to stem the accelerating "stagflation."

The postwar consensus was built upon a temporary and artificial situation in which America's chief competitors in Asia and Europe were on the sidelines as a result of the war. It took at least two decades for those economies to recover (with American aid) to the point where they could compete with American industry in fields like automobiles, steel, and energy. The U.S. economy operated at high levels during the 1950s and 1960s, exporting products around the world and maintaining balance of payments surpluses, notwithstanding the high personal and corporate taxes, the regulatory structure, and the adversarial labor unions that were the legacies of the New Deal.

That system came under increasing stress in the 1970s as the global economy began to impinge on those comfortable postwar arrangements, as European and Japanese companies challenged our industrial supremacy with high quality and efficiently produced exports, and as the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 caused immediate increases in energy prices. By early 1980, unemployment was running at 7.5 percent, inflation at 14 percent, and interest rates at 21 percent, thus punctuating a decade of slow growth and inflation.

While Ronald Reagan's policies of low marginal tax rates, deregulation, and free trade are often blamed by liberals for reversing key features of the New Deal, those policies should rather be viewed not as ideological thrusts but as adaptations to a changing global economy and as remedies for an economic crisis in many ways more severe and prolonged than the one we face today. Sooner or later some such measures would have had to be adopted to break the cycle of inflation and unemployment. Those adjustments in policy have been ratified, not only by two decades of robust growth, but also by the tacit endorsement of leading Democrats. After all, despite much weeping and wailing, prominent Democrats gradually accommodated themselves to the new framework, much as President Eisenhower adapted his administration to the New Deal reforms. President Clinton, elected to reverse the Reagan-era policies, signed the North American Free Trade Agreement, kept marginal tax rates low, did little to promote unionization, and signed a welfare reform bill that reversed a main feature of FDR's Social Security Act of 1935. As a consequence of these steps, he left office with a strong economic record.

The desire to overturn the market revolution that began in the 1980s and replace it with an up-to-date version of the New Deal is thus the ultimate snare for Democrats now fully in control of the apparatus of national policy. High marginal and corporate tax rates, managed trade and protectionism, reversal of NAFTA and other trade agreements, private-sector unionization, new health care mandates on business, subsidies for politically favored industries, increases in public-sector employment—all of which have been proposed in one form or another—are a recipe for an extended period of slow growth and stagnation of the kind not seen since the 1970s. Such an outcome would discredit Democrats, once again, as hamfisted on the economy and deprive them of resources required to fund their agenda of social programs. While this would be much to the advantage of Republicans, such an outcome might take years to reverse and would do immeasurable harm in the meantime.

A wiser though less exciting course would be to accept the inherited framework of policy with its emphasis on growth rather than redistribution, while finding other avenues by which to address Democratic priorities. If the president-elect wishes to find some inspiration in the New Deal, he could do worse than look to FDR's constructive and successful efforts to modernize the financial system as a foundation for economic recovery. FDR understood, even if many of his aides and advisers did not, that if a party in power cannot deliver economic growth, there is little else that it can hope to accomplish. ♦

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The Boston Tea Party, 1773

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Adams the Less

Making the case for Samuel

BY EDWARD ACHORN

When John Adams arrived in France in 1779 to assist Benjamin Franklin in his crucial work of obtaining loans and battleships for America's War of Independence, the first question he was asked was whether he was the "famous" Adams.

"*Le fameux Adams? Ah, le fameux Adams*," his French greeters cooed, politely ignoring his embarrassed attempts to correct them. To John's exasperation, only slightly cloaked decades later in his amusing description of his reception, the world famous Adams at the time was not the future president and "Atlas of Independence" (as one of his congressional colleagues called him) but his second cousin Samuel Adams, the hothead and fiercely partisan rabble-rouser.

Now, of course, the tables are turned. John has received the warm embrace of David McCullough's kindly prose and has become an improbable HBO miniseries idol, while Sam Adams is best known as perhaps America's finest brand of beer.

Samuel Adams
A Life
by Ira Stoll
Free Press, 352 pp., $28

Yet a case can be made that Samuel Adams was a key player in America's struggle for liberty, as Ira Stoll argues in his sprightly new biography. Calling Samuel Adams "the moral conscience of the American Revolution," Stoll contends that his intense religious beliefs—notably his faith that God would support the cause of liberty as long as Americans proved worthy of it—inspired his efforts to buck the British, and to buck up his fellow patriots who were striving for freedom against an oppressive and distant government that wished to tax them without representation.

In Stoll's telling, the supreme expression of Adams's contribution to the cause was the events of September 1777, when the dream of liberty seemed all but extinguished. On the haunted date of September 11, George Washington had suffered a devastating defeat at the Battle of Brandywine, in which 200 Americans were killed, 500 were wounded, and 400 were captured.

One year after 56 men had signed the Declaration of Independence, a skeletal band of 20 remained in Congress. Having fled Philadelphia to escape advancing British forces bent on imprisoning (and quite possibly

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hanging) the rabble-rousers, the small, scared group assembled in York to decide whether to go on. Wrote John Adams: "The prospect is chilling, on every Side: Gloomy, dark, melancholly, and dispiriting." It was cousin Samuel who stiffened the spines of his fellow politicians.

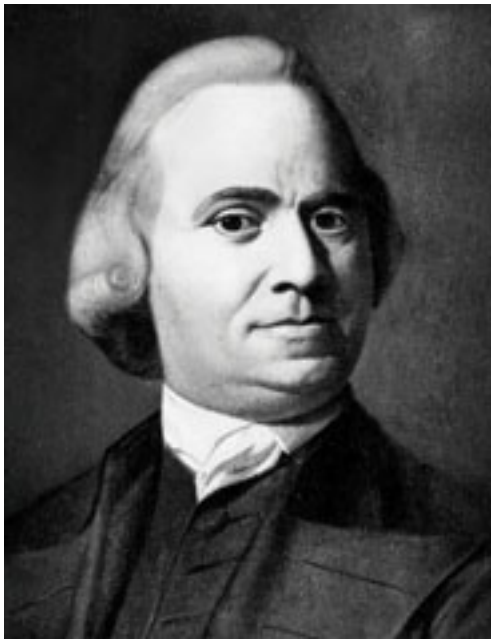
> If we despond, public confidence is destroyed, the people will no longer yield their support to a hopeless contest, and American liberty is no more. . . . Despondency becomes not the dignity of our cause, nor the character of those who are its supporters. We have proclaimed to the world our determination "to die free men, rather than live as slaves." We have appealed to Heaven for the justice of our cause, and in Heaven we have placed our trust. . . . Good tidings will soon arrive. We shall never be abandoned by Heaven while we act worthy of its aid and protection.

Congress listened, and Heaven seemed to prove Adams right a few weeks later at Saratoga, where 5,800 British soldiers surrendered to the American general Horatio Gates. That was the turning point—for French recognition of America as an independent nation followed, along with crucial military aid. With France's help, the threadbare Americans drove out the British, and established what would become the freest, richest, most powerful nation in history. Thomas Jefferson was among those who saw Adams as a monumental figure in that struggle: "For depth of purpose, zeal, and sagacity, no man in Congress exceeded, if any equalled, Sam Adams," he wrote.

The British certainly understood that Adams's drive and courage were crucial to the American cause. When Gen. Thomas Gage, Britain's military governor of Massachusetts, made a last-ditch attempt at reconciliation with the colonists in 1775, he offered His Majesty's "most gracious pardon" to all of the rebels, with the exception of two: Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

Still, it isn't hard to figure out why Sam has fallen out of fashion. Our secular times show little patience for anyone who was a self-righteous religious zealot, and who saw America as a "Christian Sparta."A classic prig, he betrayed none of his cousin John's self-deprecating humor, born of his wry awareness of the fallen nature of man. Sam's contemporaries seemed to share our revulsion, and as the years went by he faded into provincial politics rather than becoming a major figure in the new country's government.

But there is no denying the religious element of Adams's story. He perceived the colonists' struggle for liberty not as a revolutionary act but as a *conservative* one: to preserve the freedoms obtained at great cost by his Puritan forebears, particularly to worship God in a way that stood at odds with England's established religion. He hated the Church of England, thought it smacked of Roman Catholicism (which he also despised), and feared that a British bishop would be set over America. That would not only help the British promote religious conformity, he believed, it would also weaken the independent, soul-searching spirit of the colonies' citizens, effectively turning them into sheep that the government could more easily enslave.



Samuel Adams

Stoll explores this element of Adams's passion at length, and sets his beliefs in the context of the religious movements of the times. Still, he also shows why the values spawned by Adams's zealotry have little to do with the intolerance and oppression we typically associate with religious fanaticism.

For one thing, Sam was a fierce champion of freedom of the press, and loudly sounded the alarm of the dangers posed to liberty by a powerful central government. Very early on, he warned about the way special interest money in politics can hurt the common interest, and cautioned citizens about populists who used the language of America's ideals only to gain power for themselves.

"It is not infrequent," he wrote decades before the Revolution, "to hear men declaim loudly upon liberty, who, if we may judge by the whole tenor of their actions, mean nothing else by it than their own liberty—to oppress without control or the restraint of the laws all those who are weaker and poorer than themselves."

He warned that only a society that inculcates values of honesty and consideration for others can hope to be free: "Neither the wisest constitution nor the wisest laws will secure the liberty and happiness of a people whose manners are universally corrupt," he wrote.

Needless to say, these ideas are well worth contemplating as Barack Obama, acting in potent combination with a lopsidedly Democratic Congress and an even more lopsidedly cheerleading press, seeks to put his stamp on America.

As a brief biography of a complex man, *Samuel Adams* is not without its flaws and omissions. I would have liked to learn more about his relationship with his cousin, and there are aspects of his psychological development that seem to be unexplored. Yet Ira Stoll has done us a service by helping to bring Adams, and particularly his writings and passionate belief in liberty, back into the light. Certainly, the difficult struggle for freedom in the face of power-hungry government is never over, as today's headlines—"Gloomy, dark, melancholly, and dispiriting" indeed!—make ominously clear. ♦

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Here Today

The mystery of an academic novel-within-a-novel.

BY DAVID SKINNER

So you write a novel, a story about writing and writers in which you play off the personal quirks and literary indulgences of various brand names in American literature. With little malice and some justification, you get out your toy gun and take aim at (among others) a younger writer famous for a zealously intellectual, pop-culture-splashed, and indulgently long novel. And just as your toy gun is about to go bang, with its little flag unfurling, one of the very real writers at whom your weapon is pointed goes and commits suicide.

Gone Tomorrow
by P.F. Kluge
Overlook, 368 pp., $25.95

A period of mourning is underway, with problematic timing, just as your novel comes out. Ugh.

P.F. Kluge is an accomplished writer with a number of good books under his belt. *Eddie and the Cruisers*, which is being reissued by Overlook Press, is a delicate work about the jagged soul of rock 'n' roll music and the type of introverted writer who wants nothing more than to be its amanuensis. *Biggest Elvis* was another rock 'n' roll novel, an often riveting take on the U.S. military pullout from the Philippines, the exporting of American culture, and the adrenaline rush of stage performance.

So Kluge remains affectionate toward the pop culture of his youth, but he has filed more than a few complaints about the kids of today. A professor who teaches writing and postwar American literature at Kenyon, he's used his perch in Gambier, Ohio, to observe and criticize the coddled American college student, whom he suggests would be much better off if his behind were kissed less often by administrators with dollar signs in their eyes and *U.S. News & World Report* rankings where their hearts used to be.

Such thinking—in *Alma Mater*, his book on the life of a liberal arts college, and a rather tough essay entitled "Camp Kenyon" that appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*—has made Kluge a magnetic and yet crotchety character at the school of which he is both a critic and an old friend.

This ambivalent position is not unlike the one that had been occupied by the recently departed George Canaris in *Gone Tomorrow*. Canaris was a writing professor at a small college in Ohio, and a particularly famous novelist who had fallen into a Salingeresque silence since the publication of his last book more than 30 years earlier. All this time he was said to be at work on *The Beast*, a manuscript that might never have been written (as argued by resentful colleagues) or has proven unfinishable (suggested gently by sympathetic colleagues) but was (everyone agrees) the magnum opus for the sake of whose slow construction Canaris had accepted an undemanding celebrity appointment in Ohio many years ago.

In all that time, while Canaris wrestled with (and perhaps lost to) *The Beast*, he has become, like Kluge, a rueful devotee of this little college and its small-town life. But now he is being forced to retire, to make way for a younger, hipper, more prolific writer whose name means a lot more to the younger generation of students whose parents pay so many of the bills.

Gone Tomorrow is the title given to the book's novel-within-the-novel, which was written by Canaris in the first person as an account of his last year on staff, but introduced by Mark May, a likeably underachieving professor of literature whose job, as Canaris's literary executor, it is to search Canaris's house until he finds *The Beast*. The first thing May finds, however, is this other manuscript, in which (along with much else) Canaris has recorded the first meeting between him and his replacement, John Henry Mallon.

> "I've read your books" he said. "Great."
> "I've lifted yours," I responded. "Heavy."

This exchange takes place on stage during a convocation ceremony, in a section dated September 2005, where the president singles out Canaris for his upcoming retirement and announces, to the great enthusiasm of students, the arrival of Mallon.

In June 2005 David Foster Wallace walked onstage at Kenyon College to deliver the commencement address. Himself a writing professor at a small liberal arts college (Pomona in Claremont, California), Wallace used his speech to interrogate the cliché that a liberal arts education teaches you how to think. He summed up the basic notion as: "Learning how to think really means learning how to exercise some control over how and what you think." Fail to do this, he said in his characteristic argot of scholarly-sounding slang, and "you will get totally hosed." You may even fail to learn how to live.

Wallace then mentioned suicide:

> It is not the least bit coincidental that adults who commit suicide with firearms almost always shoot themselves in the head. They shoot the terrible master. And the truth is that most of these suicides are actually dead long before they pull the trigger.

Eerie, no? And of course, tragic. Reading the lecture today one realizes that here is a man who thinks about killing himself, but at the moment is persevering, finding the power to affirm life. And yet cold as it sounds, Wallace the writer remains fair game as much as anyone, including some other youngish widely hailed geniuses—Dave Eggers and some other writers are also fingered as graphomaniacs in *Gone Tomorrow*—who resemble John Henry Mallon in one respect or another.

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In *Gone Tomorrow*, however, death comes for the old writer in mysterious circumstances. Kluge sets up his novel to suggest a murder mystery, but then dashes the expectation as if to say that the greater mystery concerns Canaris's work as a writer. Is it immortal, like his one novel that regularly appears on those 100 Best lists beloved of magazines, or is it "here today, gone tomorrow"—a forgotten worthy, perhaps, like *An Operational Necessity* by Gwyn Griffin, which sits on a bookshelf in Canaris's house?

An interesting difference separates the book Canaris is said to be writing, *The Beast*, and the one Kluge offers the reader, *Gone Tomorrow*. The latter is much shorter and can contain within its shortness the essence of the much longer work. A synopsis of *The Beast* comes through as Canaris revisits important episodes in its writing: a visit to Germany to research the town where Canaris's father was born; a visit from a former student, now a best-selling author, who helps Canaris get the creative juices flowing again; and memories of the old Hollywood where German Jews fleeing Hitler came to continue their cinematic trade. Seen like this, *The Beast* truly seems to be a great book. But in its sprawling plan one might notice the endless makings of the infinite novel Kluge criticizes.

Another act of compaction takes place when Canaris takes his girlfriend on a trip around the world. Kluge can write beautiful travel journalism—and does so for National Geographic's *Traveler*—so taking the reader around the world would not have been out of the question. But instead we get the happy-hour telling of a round-the-world trip. One need not be a philistine to consider such short cuts more inviting.

Where *The Beast* may be great art capable of spanning continents and decades, *Gone Tomorrow* is something more modest and yet thoroughly pleasurable: a solid academic comedy; a moving consideration of what it means to join a community and say, despite reservations, Here is Where I Belong; and a warm thank-you note to writers famous and forgotten for the reader's reward of a good lean book. ♦

Notes for Moderns

The atonal sounds of the 20th century in music.

BY ALGIS VALIUNAS

Jane Rhodes as Salome, 1958

ROGER VIOLLET / GETTY IMAGES

Twentieth century music takes a lot of getting used to, and more often than not it turns out to be an acquired distaste.

The musical canon, especially if alliteration is your thing, still runs to Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms, with perhaps Berlioz and Bruckner tossed in as a bonus. These continue to be the composers whose works get patrons to fill concert halls. Busoni, Bartók, and Berio don't have a comparable effect—indeed, they often have the reverse effect, keeping concertgoers away in droves. The serious music of the 20th century remains difficult, forbidding. We prefer to engage, or to indulge, simpler or more agreeable feelings in more readily intelligible forms, and the 18th and 19th centuries provide these as the recent past does not.

The Rest Is Noise
Listening to the Twentieth Century
by Alex Ross
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux
640 pp., $30

Why this should be so preoccupies Alex Ross, the classical music critic for the *New Yorker*, in his first book. It is because one hears the sinister darkness of the time in its music—think of Alban Berg, Arnold Schönberg, Kurt Weill, Anton Webern, Dmitri Shostakovich, John Cage, Benjamin Britten, Pierre Boulez, and Adrian Leverkühn, the fictional antihero of Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus*, who contracts syphilis deliberately in order to invoke diabolical creative powers—that the ordinary listener runs screaming to the comforting arms of Mozart. Yet there are countervailing ten-

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dencies in modern music as well, which offer succor and solace, sometimes in the very face of horror and pain.

Ross opens with the 1906 performance of Richard Strauss's opera *Salome* that the composer conducted in Graz, Austria. Giacomo Puccini, Gustav Mahler, Schönberg, Berg—and Adrian Leverkühn—were all in attendance. Adolf Hitler may have been there, too.

The Judaean princess Salome is the epitome of sexually unhinged depravity who performs the Dance of the Seven Veils for her concupiscent stepfather, Herodes—as sopranos have grown slinkier, stage directors have increasingly enjoined them to end their dance nude—and demands as her reward the head of his prisoner Jochanaan, John the Baptist. After Salome kisses the decapitated head at the climax of a demented but undeniably lovely aria, Herodes orders his soldiers to crush her to death with their shields.

Ross analyzes the rising scale on the clarinet that begins the opera and finds it split between two "opposing harmonic spheres," C-sharp major and G major; separating the notes C-sharp and G is the interval of three whole steps, formally termed the tritone and informally the devil's interval, so called for its disturbing effect on the hearer. The primacy that auditory disturbance will assume in modern music is one of Ross's themes.

Salome was a smash—and its overwhelming success came as a shock. An artistic flair for rendering the morally reprehensible with the sonically bizarre evidently could be made to pay off big. Although no less a musical authority than Kaiser Wilhelm II predicted that *Salome* would do Strauss "a lot of damage," opera houses in 25 cities presently put on the work, and the composer would say that thanks to the damage he was able to build a villa in Garmisch.

Strauss's great rival was Mahler, who thought *Salome* an esoteric masterwork but could not fathom why the public professed such a yen for it. At least according to his self-created legend, in his lifetime Mahler never was able to win the adulation that Strauss did, and therefore set his sights on the good opinion of future music lovers.

"I am what Nietzsche calls an 'untimely' one. . . . The true 'timely' one is Richard Strauss," said Mahler. "That is why he already enjoys immortality here on earth." But Mahler had no real reason to complain, Ross insists: The critics may not have loved his symphonies, but the public did. His popularity, more than Strauss's, represented the twilight of ever-adored romanticism, however shot through with ironic modern monkeyshines it might have been.

With Schönberg, who followed Franz Liszt in breaking with the fundamental tradition of Western music and took to operating outside the boundaries of the major and minor key systems, modernity grew ever more grotesque blossoms. The Expressionist agonies of Schönberg's music flowered from living sores. In the summer of 1908 he discovered his wife Mathilde *in flagrante* with the painter and scoundrel Richard Gerstl. After trying to make a life with her lover, Mathilde went back to Schönberg and Gerstl hanged himself with particularly lurid *élan*—naked in front of a full-length mirror.

The whole scandal brought Schönberg to the verge of suicide himself: "I have cried, have behaved like someone in despair, have made decisions and then rejected them, have had ideas of suicide and almost carried them out, have plunged from one madness into another—in a word, I am totally broken." Yet Schönberg was an artist who forged a style for his desolation. In his Second Quartet, completed that same summer, he wrote music of brazen novelty. As Ross writes:

> The [second] movement ends in a fearsome sequence of four-note figures, which are made up of fourths separated by a tritone. In them may be discerned traces of the bifurcated scale that begins *Salome*. But there is no longer a sense of tonalities colliding. Instead, the very concept of a chord is dissolving into a matrix of intervals.

He finished the Quartet with a soprano singing settings of Stefan George poems, serene and floating, then wrote a song cycle on George's *Book of the Hanging Gardens*. But the otherworldly rapture gave way to a demonic fury against his own life. *Erwartung*, or *Expectation*, a monodrama for soprano and orchestra, in which a woman comes upon her murdered lover's corpse in the woods at night, is a protracted shriek of convulsive morbidity. In the tract *Harmonielehre*, or *Theory of Harmony* (1911), Schönberg derides the bourgeois longing for comfort and extols the bracing plunge into icy depths of thought, citing August Strindberg on the ugliness of life and Maurice Maeterlinck on the prevalence of human misery.

Schönberg had some very able acolytes, who with their master formed the Second Viennese School. Ross particularly admires Anton Webern's 1909 orchestral cycle, Six Pieces, Opus 6, written in unresolved mourning for his mother's death three years earlier; austere frenetic beauty becomes cacophonous ugliness, and crashing chords send splinters of sound flying like debris from a terrible wreck.

Ross also rightly loves the operas of Alban Berg, *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*, excursions into terrifying derangement, flamethrower lust, and murder. There are passages in *Lulu*—the story of the descent into prostitution of an elegant slut, who ends up a victim of Jack the Ripper—in which romanticism receives its final send-off, as though Berg has shattered a magnum of the finest Mahler and is holding the broken champagne bottle to your throat. In 1923 Schönberg devised the twelve-tone system of composition, in which a chromatic series, or row, of twelve consecutive notes served as the basis for what Ross calls "thematic play."

"All told," explains Ross, "the chromatic scale contains a huge number of permutations—to be exact, 479,001,600, the factorial of 12." That does leave room for play, but twelve-tone music mostly sounds like a lot of hard work.

In Paris they went at music-making in a different spirit. After getting ethereal solemnity out of his system with the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902), Claude Debussy turned increasingly to elemental festivity.

> This was the germ of an alternative modernism, one that would reach maturity in the stripped-down, folk-

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based, jazz-happy, machine-driven music of the twenties. In essence, two avant-gardes were forming side by side. The Parisians were moving into the brightly lit world of daily life. The Viennese went in the opposite direction, illuminating the terrible depths with their holy torches.

Erik Satie, who played piano at the Auberge du Clou, made his name with the score for the 1917 Ballets Russes production *Parade*, which united the talents of Jean Cocteau, Pablo Picasso, Léonide Massine, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Serge Diaghilev: "Satie's score defines a new art of musical collage: jaunty tunes don't quite get off the ground, rhythms intertwine and overlap and stop and start, sped-up whole-tone passages sound like Warner Brothers cartoon music yet to come, bitter chorales and broken fugues honor the fading past." Finding even later Debussy too airborne for his taste, Cocteau spoke out for music of generous homeliness: "We need music on the earth, MUSIC FOR EVERY DAY. Enough of hammocks, garlands, gondolas! I want someone to make me music that I can live in like a house."

Les Six—Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Louis Durey, Germaine Tailleferre, and Georges Auric—led the postwar charge toward what Ross calls "modern, urban, non-Teutonic values." A brief rapprochement between Les Six and the Second Viennese School—they played each other's music and said nice things when they met—was succeeded by a renewal of animosities. Even when it came to music, the Franco-German antipathy was all but ineradicable.

There were some in Weimar Germany, however, who found French raciness and ease to their liking. Ross describes Paul Hindemith as a more rambunctious version of Milhaud; this antic master could perpetrate something as preposterous as *The Flying Dutchman Overture as Sight-Read by a Bad Spa Orchestra by the Village Well at Seven in the Morning.* Ernst Krenek introduced jazz, or something like it, to the operatic stage in *Jonny spielt auf,* or *Johnny Strikes Up* (1927), a signal work in the novel subgenre known as *Zeitoper,* or Opera of the Time, which favored distinctively modern settings such as factories or ocean liners, and often had its characters break into a tango or Charleston.

Hindemith composed a 1929 *Zeitoper* called *News of the Day*, featuring a nude soprano in a bathtub. When Hindemith wrote the opera *Mathis der Maler* a few years later in the hope of pleasing Hitler with what Ross calls "the holy-German-art ethos of Wagner's *Meistersinger*," the Führer, that blushing rose petal, remembered the scandalous earlier work and shut Hindemith out of his patronage. In 1939 Hindemith took the hint and headed for America, where he became a professor at Yale.

Arnold Schönberg, 1944

Other musicians and writers who fled the Reich—and settled in the warmth of Los Angeles—included Schönberg, Erich Korngold, Bruno Walter, Otto Klemperer, Thomas Mann, Theodor Adorno, Franz Werfel, and Alma Mahler; Igor Stravinsky and Sergei Rachmaninov represented the Russian political exiles in L.A. One artist who remained in Nazi Germany was Richard Strauss, and he suffered frightfulness piled on humiliation. Hitler seduced him with flattery, then wound up leveling him when he protested the regime's barbarity. It is painful to read of Strauss's foolishness. His son had married a Jew and her grandmother was confined in the Theresienstadt concentration camp; Strauss showed up at the gate one day declaring he had come to collect her. The guards who turned him away must have howled like demons.

Like Hitler, Stalin took an interest in what his subject artists were producing, and they mostly would have preferred to do without his attentions, which often led to the camps or nine grams of lead in the back of the skull. Ross ably and even eloquently recounts the travails of Shostakovich and Serge Prokofiev under the Bolshevik regime.

In 1936 Stalin attended a performance of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which Ross calls "the tale of a vaguely Lulu-like Russian housewife who leaves a string of bodies in her wake." Stalin found the piece emphatically not to his taste. A 600-word editorial *cum* review in *Pravda*, "Muddle Instead of Music," excoriated the young composer for his untamed dissonance. (Ross does not mention this, but the lewd trombones came in for an especially bad time.) The editorial put the fear of godlessness into Shostakovich. He was at work on his Fourth Symphony when the editorial appeared, and the finished composition did not satisfy the apparatchiks. In a fog of apprehension—the Great Terror was getting underway—Shostakovich withdrew the symphony without a performance. It would be nearly two years before he presented another major work before the public.

Some opponents of the regime took the Fifth Symphony to be a bold outcry of dissent, others a knuckling-under; some ardent Stalinists, for their part, protested that Shostakovich had failed to heed *Pravda's* warning. "But the better part of the audience," says Ross, "seemed to identify strongly with the symphony's assertion of will—what [the composer's son] Maxim Shostakovich called 'the determination of a strong man to BE.'"

Critics have variously portrayed Shostakovich as a cowed stooge and as an esoteric dissident; Ross shows a frightened man who can seem like a "cut-out paper doll on a string," as Shostakovich

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described himself with brutal self-contempt after submitting meekly to official criticism in 1948 but who also somehow summoned the courage to reveal in his music brilliant flashes of his soul, and of his nation's soul, in the very teeth of the Soviet terror.

Many of the works discussed so far are what Olivier Messiaen called "black masterpieces," because they deal in the malign and deformed. After the Second World War, what Ross dubs "catastrophe style" became the going thing. But there were those composers who resisted the impulse of the age to give in to melancholia and doomsaying. György Ligeti, a Hungarian Jew who lost most of his family to Hitler's genocide and then suffered through 11 years of Communist oppression before he escaped to the West, developed a musical language of "luminosity and wit."

"He opened himself to all music past and present," Ross writes, "absorbing everything from the Renaissance masses of Johannes Ockeghem to the saxophone solos of Eric Dolphy, from the virtuoso piano writing of Liszt to the rhythmic polyphony of African Pygmy tribes."

Messiaen, who wrote his *Quartet for the End of Time* in a German prisoner-of-war camp—the only instruments available were clarinet, violin, cello, and piano, so he wrote it for these—ended the piece with "sweetly ringing chords in the key of E major," responding to "the mechanized insanity of the Second World War by offering up the purest, simplest sounds he could find." Birdsong was to become an essential element of Messiaen's sound world; the sweet beauty of God's creation bemused this devout Catholic artist to the end of his days.

A commission by Alice Tully to write a piece for the American bicentennial brought him to the canyons of Utah in 1972, where he took in the sometimes-harrowing beauties of the landscape and the always-glorious calls of the birds. Ross considers the work Messiaen produced from this journey, *From the Canyons to the Stars*, perhaps his finest. His five-hour opera *Saint Francis of Assisi* surely rivals it, representing "the negation of the negation, the death of death."

And then there was the all-American sound of the so-called minimalists such as Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and John Adams, who returned to harmonic fundamentals and a regular pulse, and introduced simple reiterated melodic patterns, sometimes to the point of stultification. As Reich put it:

> Schönberg gives a very honest musical portrayal of his times. I salute him—but I don't want to write like him. Stockhausen, Berio, and Boulez were portraying in very honest terms what it was like to pick up the pieces of a bombed-out continent after World War II. But for some American in 1948 or 1958 or 1968—in the real context of tail fins, Chuck Berry, and millions of burgers sold—to pretend that instead we're really going to have the dark-brown *Angst* of Vienna is a lie, a musical lie.

How music expresses the heart and soul of a time and place, and how renegade geniuses such as Ligeti and Messiaen express their own heart and soul contrary to the prevailing spirit of the age, are the main themes of this book, and Ross develops them with fine intelligence. His strength is in description, the first task of criticism. He tends to scant judgment—although this may not be a major failing in what is principally a work of history. *The Rest Is Noise* is a significant book, valuable to the neophyte who wants an introduction to 20th-century music, and to the comparatively adept reader who wants to deepen his knowledge of the mysteries. ♦

We're Not Laughing

Two political scientists are stranded on an island . . .

BY DAVID GUASPARI

Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein have followed their best-selling *Plato and a Platypus Walk Into a Bar: Understanding Philosophy Through Jokes* by another book with a dopey title and a small number of tiny pages. The publisher, scenting a franchise (albeit with steadily lengthening subtitles), announced an initial printing of 250,000, and probably guessed right.

Aristotle and an Aardvark Go to Washington
Understanding Political Doublespeak Through Philosophy and Jokes
by Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein
Abrams Image, 196 pp., $18.95

Aristotle is a parade of rhetorical tricks illustrated by real-life examples, most from the mouths of current American politicians and pundits. One may fairly ask what such an enterprise offers aside from the modest pleasures of watching fish in a barrel being shot. The philosophy advertised in the title consists basically of name checks: Here a one-sentence definition of epistemology, there two pages on theories of truth, and so on. It presents the authors as men who have some learning but wear it lightly—for example, by interrupting their explanation of Hilary Putnam's coherence theory of truth with a comedic "*Whaaa*?"

The advertised jokes, mostly chestnuts, are meant to reinforce the real-life examples. They are supplemented, in turn, by a couple dozen pages of *New Yorker* (or *New Yorker*ish) cartoons and by various digressions printed in blue ink and surrounded by decorative borders. As the reader is never far from one of these humor units, and no topic lasts for more than three pages or so, the format is nicely optimized for limited attention spans.

The authors also contribute comic sallies of their own. Consider, for

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example, their discussion of quotation out of context. It cites a congressman who selectively quotes *Earth in the Balance* to accuse Al Gore of valuing yew trees more than people, and a theater advert that staples together fragments of a so-so review to manufacture a rave, and then sums up with a one-liner: "In other words, yews had to be there."

The occurrence of an original humor unit is sometimes, and helpfully, indicated by an exclamation point. Beware, however, that upping the boff-quotient of a joke with one of these little rim shots is a tricky business best left to comedy professionals. Wannabes should first learn how to handle Funny Numbers: "We were not permitted a sufficient number of pages to cover the most egregious political whoppers perpetrated in the last ten years (72,383, by our informal estimate)." The Funny Number gag is as close to a comic gimme as it gets.

In strict logic, cheating is cheating whatever political ends it serves, and any illustration of a fallacy is as good as any other. Taking that principle to heart, the authors' chosen cheaters are, by an overwhelming margin, Republican and/or right-wing. And the indictments can be overzealous; not all of them stand up to examination. I offer these observations in a nonpartisan spirit exemplified by a famous *Seinfeld* episode. Jerry's dentist has converted to Judaism so that he can tell Jewish jokes. When Jerry complains, he's asked, "And this offends you, as a Jew?"

"No," replies Seinfeld. "It offends me as a comedian." I am offended as a logician *and* a comedian—or, at least, someone with a sideline in supposedly comic fiction and plays.

Cynically stroking the prejudices of one's target audience can, of course, be a sound marketing strategy. (Markos Moulitsas, the blogging impresario of the angry left, found the book "darn entertaining.") But doing so *sincerely* is problematic. For example, George W. Bush's post-9/11 declaration that "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" is alleged to be "from a logical point of view . . . clearly" an example of a false dilemma, since those alternatives don't exhaust the possibilities.

This claim is bizarre. It was universally understood that Bush was not stating a proposition but announcing a policy: that the United States would preclude any other possibilities. Oddly enough, after further huffing about the perniciousness of false dilemmas, the authors concede just that, and then change the line of attack: Bush had—maliciously, I guess, but at this point, who knows?—expressed his intentions in a fallacious way (or a way that would have been fallacious had he meant what they concede he did not) because that was "far punchier"—with the result (presumably bad, since this is the finale of an accusation) that "much of the international community thought better than to nitpick the logic of his formulation."

White House Correspondents Dinner, 2006

ASSOCIATED PRESS

To which one can only say, "*Whaaa*?"

In compiling this book, the authors seem also to have suffered a *deformación profesional*—prone to feel that whatever got them riled could find a place there. So they claim that a Homeric-length football simile from Senator Charles Grassley is a weak (i.e., deceptive) analogy when it was merely an embarrassing one. They criticize a journalist's lazy evasion that "if they're both mad at you, you know you're doing your job" with an outburst of weird pedantry, and then decide to show their moxie by taking on one of the big boys, George Santayana, doing one of his greatest hits: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." This, they acknowledge, is "not fallacious in itself, but there is an implicit conclusion that makes it fallacious. We are led to the conclusion that those who *do* remember the past are *not* condemned to repeat it." So his remark is a fallacy because we misuse it. (And while we're at it, who is "we"?)

More interesting is the authors' anomalous choice of a nonpolitical example when a high profile political example was ready to hand—a Maureen Dowd column, much remarked on, that used cut-and-paste to fabricate a quotation from George W. Bush. One explanation, plausibly malicious, is that the authors couldn't bring themselves to show the loathed Bush at the receiving end of a dirty trick. Another is chance. Another is their lack of interest in the news media as political actors with characteristic forms of misbehavior. One could write a small monograph on the making of "corrections" by placing a small box at the bottom of page 18 to retract errors that were originally splashed on the front page. Dowd used a form of "silent correction," inserting the full quotation into a subsequent column with no indication that it had ever appeared in doctored form.

By and large, of course, the examples are correct, and a reader could learn a few things—were he willing to apply them to himself. Does it matter that two aging college buddies wanted to position themselves as merry japesters and speakers of truth to power, and stake their claim to the comedy throne of Andy Rooney? So what if all the examples swing the same way? That's no outrage to logic. So two aging college buddies think, like most of us, that their crotchets are savvy and interesting and merit widespread attention—when, of course, their observations are third-hand, mediocre, and predictable. The real question is, Will there be a sequel? And the answer, surely, is Yes. ♦

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Brain Drain

Are Americans hostile to intellectuals, or vice versa?

BY PAUL HOLLANDER

American anti-intellectualism is a venerable and much lamented phenomenon, as well as a paradox, considering the American respect for education and the resources devoted to it. Anti-intellectualism also seems incongruous with American accomplishments in science and technology.

However, one may separate the veneration of education from the popular suspicion of intellectuals. These suspicions have coexisted for a long time with the respect for education and the determination to make its blessings widely available. This is the key question raised in this timely volume discussing

> why the United States has proved more susceptible than other economically advanced nations to the toxic combination of forces that are the enemies of intellect, learning and reason. . . . What accounts for the powerful American attraction to values that seem so at odds not only with intellectual modernism and science but with the old Enlightenment rationalism that made such a vital contribution to the founding of our nation?

Susan Jacoby seeks the answer by placing these cultural-intellectual trends in a historical context, with special reference to the part played by religion, the ideas of the Enlightenment and social Darwinism, but not the ideals of equality.

The suspicion of intellectuals is inseparable from American egalitarianism. They have been widely perceived as a group that looks down on ordinary mortals who don't have their educational credentials and vocabulary. Intellectuals have also been criticized for being removed from the rest of society by their arrogance and elitism, preoccupied with abstruse ideas couched in impenetrable jargon and of little use to regular people. Lack of common sense, impracticality, and a foolish idealism complete these negative stereotypes.

The Age of American Unreason
by Susan Jacoby
Pantheon, 384 pp., $26

It has often been suggested that anti-intellectual sentiments follow from the nature of a commercial society that does not appreciate reflection, or the pursuit of higher ideals which don't yield tangible benefit or profit. In more recent times, Jacoby suggests, anti-intellectualism also fed on the conflation of intellectuals with the radical left, and she finds it difficult to understand why this identification persists well after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But pro-Soviet or pro-communist leanings do not exhaust the range of attitudes intellectuals display as tokens of alienation which invite popular misgivings.

Jacoby argues that anti-intellectualism—including anti-rationalism, disdain for science, and popular ignorance—has catastrophically increased during recent decades. This trend finds prominent expression in the decline of educational standards, the increasing dominance of popular culture (especially "the shift from print to video culture"), and even in political discourse. Her indictment of what has come to pass for higher education is clear and unequivocal:

> Anyone who takes more than a cursory look at the vast array of college curriculum offerings on popular culture, from "fat studies" to in-depth examination of television sitcoms, knows how far standards have been lowered. . . . How can it be that American culture has so debased itself that institutions calling themselves universities, and academic bodies calling themselves English departments actually give course credits for writing "fear journals"? . . . It is now possible at many institutions of so-called higher learning for a student to receive a degree in psychology without having taken a mid-level biology course; for an African-American studies major to graduate without reading the basic texts of the "white" Enlightenment; for a business major to graduate without having studied any literature after her freshman year. . . .
> All of these college graduates, should they choose to become teachers at any level . . . will pass on their narrowness and ignorance to the next generation.

Jacoby admits to a "somewhat jaundiced view of the sixties youth culture" and recognizes that the rejection of "the idea of aesthetic hierarchy is unquestionably one of the most powerful cultural legacies of the sixties." Yet she resists a full recognition of the *political* roots of these attitudes in radical leftist egalitarianism, and the fashionable irrationality of the period.

Instead she focuses on, and holds responsible, the fundamentalist religious forces (and their neoconservative allies) on the one hand, and popular culture and, especially, television on the other. While her critique of popular culture is sound, she does not make clear what is cause or effect: Are so many Americans indifferent to and ignorant of high culture because of their voracious consumption of mind-numbing popular culture, or do they embrace the latter because they are anti-intellectual, incurious, and badly educated?

Jacoby's major conclusion is that "the most enduring and important anti-intellectual forces of [the 1960s] were apolitical. . . . The fusion of video, the culture of celebrity and the marketing of youth is the real anti-intellectual legacy of the 60s." But her insistence that popular culture is basically apolitical is questionable. Closer inspection reveals that it has absorbed many of the politically correct pieties of the 1960s even if its prime function is entertainment.

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Her other major proposition is that the ascendancy of the religious right is part of a broader trend: "The anti-rationalism of the later twentieth century tapped into a broader fear of modernism, and hatred of secularism that extend beyond the religious realm." This is an important point, but the fear of modernity is not limited to the religious right. Inexplicably, Jacoby barely touches on the hostility to modernity that has animated the activists and protestors of the 1960s and the counterculture it has spawned.

This counterculture, both in its political and cultural manifestations, was not merely opposed to the Vietnam war, racism, and sexism; its rejection of American society and culture was much broader and deeper. Even its opposition to capitalism was intertwined with a visceral rejection of modernity. These critics of American society rejected what they considered dehumanizing scientific rationality, the idea of objective truth, modern social organizations, impersonality, rigorous formal education, urban and industrial life, even specialization. They dreamed of simple communal life in pristine rural settings untainted by technology, hierarchy, role differentiation, and division of labor.

The radical protestors and activists of the 1960s entertained utopian aspirations and conceived of themselves as the new noble savages. They were also drawn to what they perceived as the contemporary incarnations of the noble savage: the peasants of the Third World, seemingly untouched by modernity.

Anti-intellectualism found major expression in the educational reforms inspired by the radical egalitarianism of the '60s. Contrary to Jacoby's assertions, the cultural and political values of the period did converge, although it is also true that, subsequently, the counterculture (or aspects thereof) became commercialized. Standards dropped not only because students have been treated as privileged customers, but also because of the direct impact of the values and beliefs of the '60s.

Radical egalitarianism demanded not only equal opportunity but equal results; "elitism" became a bad word. Grades were abolished, or grade inflation became its functional equivalent; teachers came to be more rigorously evaluated than students; "tracking" in high school was rejected as inegalitarian and harmful to minorities. Requirements were abandoned or reduced, and students were urged to devise their own curricula. They, too, were seen as potential noble savages, bursting with unrealized potential, to be liberated from requirements, institutional structures, academic specialization, and the authority of teachers. The Weathermen broke into high schools yelling "Jailbreak!" urging students to escape their suffocating, regimented environment.

Susan Jacoby

For the radicals of the '60s and their descendants, any form of differentiation or discrimination became suspect. Distinguishing between high culture and mass culture was reactionary, and many academic and nonacademic intellectuals championed mass culture to show that their heart was in the right place.

Jacoby occasionally admits that the attacks on rationality also came from the left, but pays little attention to it. While the irrationality of the right has had many manifestations (e.g., campaigns against the teaching of evolution), overall it had little impact on what is being taught in the great majority of colleges and universities, on the movies made in Hollywood, on plays performed in theaters, on the content and message of best-selling novels, and on what is displayed in museums. The number of conservative faculty members in departments of humanities and social sciences remains minuscule. And if student demonstrations declined over the past three decades, it is because faculties and administrators anticipated or readily met the demands of those who would demonstrate.

Jacoby dismisses the impact of the '60s radicals on the ground that their numbers were small, overlooking that organized and determined minorities can wield great influence and power, especially when their demands are backed up by disruption or the threat of violence, as was the case during the 1960s and '70s. Black Studies, in particular, were often the direct result of such intimidation (and of white-liberal guilt) rather than a desire to "ghettoize" ethnic and women's studies, as Jacoby believes.

Another contributor to the decline of educational standards not discussed here is affirmative action. Driven by a laudable desire to right the wrongs of the past, educational institutions lowered or diluted standards of both student admission and faculty hiring. Less qualified students had to be provided with less demanding curriculum and less stringent evaluation.

A most questionable assertion is that "of the most potent myths associated with the 60s, the most wrongheaded is . . . to equate and conflate the decade's youth culture with its left-wing counterculture."

While the youth culture has some apolitical roots and attributes—including a longstanding cultural veneration of the young and youthfulness—it has been deeply influenced by the values, preferred forms of recreation, and entertainment of the political counterculture of the '60s. Yet it is also true that youth culture, including some of its political aspects, has been co-opted by the market. If Che Guevara T-shirts sell, American businesses will gladly supply them. But buying and wearing them is not without political meaning. It is true that many things once considered subversive have become "mainstream," but that doesn't mean that "mainstreaming" had no political and cultural consequences. ♦

CHRIS RAMIREZ

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Period Piece

Where credit is due the little black circle.

BY **KARI BARBIC**

Look! There on the page. It's a crumb . . . it's a stain . . . no, it's super dot—come to save the sentence from rambling.

The dot, however, can do so much more than bring a sentence to its close, as the Humez brothers would like to remind us in *On the Dot*. And in order to prepare us for their treatise on the dot, the brothers Humez invite readers, in the preface, to "imagine for a moment what the world would be like if it awoke one morning to discover that during the night the dot had completely disappeared as though it had never been."

On the Dot
The Speck That Changed the World
by Alexander Humez and Nicholas Humez
Oxford, 272 pp., $24.95

The horror! No, really. Take a moment. Imagine. Endless sentences. Gone are the semicolons and colons, and the other remaining end marks. They could not stand without the dot's faithful support. The comma would be in position to take frightening prominence, for who could take the humble dot's place? Surely not the # sign.

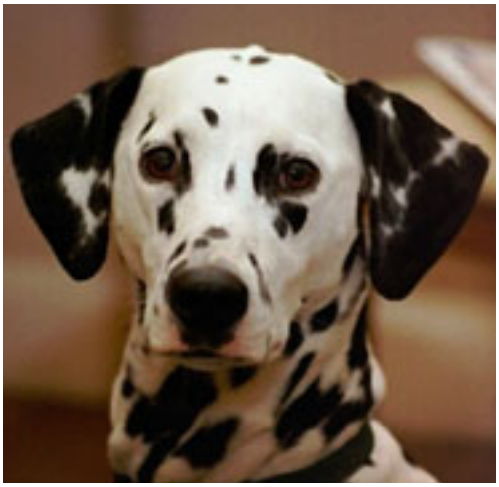
Obviously, the dot is not in grave danger, and the Humez brothers are not suggesting that it is. Instead, they seek to bring to light those corners of our lives where the dot has infiltrated without much notice or appreciation. The eradication of the dot is not being called for, nor is it likely to be; the dot is well anchored in our daily usage in so many ways that it cannot be removed without grave consequences and mass confusion.

The dot is in a different kind of danger—shocking though it may seem—facing, perhaps, the most frightening fate any punctuation mark might experience: being overlooked. Begging the question, what if a sentence ended with a period and no one noticed? After all, we feel morally superior when we find a typo in the *New York Times* (or THE WEEKLY STANDARD, for that matter) or better yet, when we find a punctuation error in a grammar book. But do we stop to notice all the times when punctuation is used correctly? Do these triumphs of the human intellect, and typesetting, earn our admiration? Of course not. Such effusion would be like applauding everybody who walks down the hallway without tripping.

As readers may have noticed, there's been a sort of grammar-awareness revival in recent years. From Lynne Truss's best-selling *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* (2004) to the founding of National Punctuation Day (September 24) that same year, awareness is indisputably on the rise. Yet this renaissance is not necessarily marked by widespread, improved usage but by an obsession with the marks themselves. Actions by enthusiasts such as the grammar vigilantes at TEAL (Typo Eradication Advancement League)—arrested for vandalizing a historic sign in Grand Canyon National Park while "typo hunting" last summer—do not help educate the public on correct punctuation. They merely spread grammatically correct graffiti.

To their credit, the Humez brothers take us beyond grammar vigilantism and demonstrate that even the most common punctuation marks serve a purpose beyond grammar. They focus on the history and use of the dot and those punctuation marks where it resides (semicolons, question marks, ellipses, etc.). They delve into uses of the dot beyond punctuation, in Morse Code and musical notation and mathematical and computational punctuation. And since there is only so much to be said about the dot itself, they take readers down many a winding rabbit trail exploring English usage and etymology.

So while the dot has certainly left its mark in our culture, and continues to do so, you have to wonder at the purpose of fixating on the mark itself. A sentence is defined as "a complete thought," not as "a group of words that ends with a dot." Yes, punctuation has played a crucial role in lending clarity to the written word, and will continue to do so; but man's ability to communicate long antedates the dot's punctuational prominence. So is the dot truly *The Speck That Changed the World*? It has certainly been there to lend assistance to developing forms of communication. But regardless of its role and historic influence, the dot should be most proud of its fundamental, and most conspicuous, role: fully stopping a sentence.



In this capacity, it remains the last, and most effective, bulwark between mankind and the eternal run-on. ♦

Kari Barbic is an assistant editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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"Leon E. Panetta, a former congressman and White House chief of staff, has been selected by President-elect Barack Obama to head the Central Intelligence Agency. The choice … immediately revealed divisions in the party as two senior lawmakers questioned why Mr. Obama would nominate a candidate with limited experience in intelligence matters."
—New York Times, *January 6, 2009*

Parody

SENATE CONFIRMATION HEARINGS TRANSCRIPT - Day 1 (cont'd.):

using a razor-sharp bowler that he throws like a Frisbee.

FEINSTEIN: So what you are saying, Mr. Panetta, is you do not know what you would do with regard to reforming our clandestine operations in the Middle East?

PANETTA: What I'm saying is we need to protect our agents. And we need to protect that coveted NOC list. That stands for Non-Official Cover, by the way. Don't know if you knew that.

FEINSTEIN: Yes, I knew that, thank you. So your main concern is preventing another Aldrich Ames incident?

PANETTA: Well, senator, I was thinking of someone more senior. Like Jim Phelps. He sold us out but he paid a price—and we are forever grateful to agents like Ethan Hunt for keeping this country safe. Talk about an impossible mission.

FEINSTEIN: Frankly I am quite confused but my time is up so I yield to my colleague, Sen. Rockefeller.

ROCKEFELLER: Thank you, Sen. Feinstein. I think I speak for everyone on this committee when I say it worries me that you are not at all familiar with the fundamentals of intelligence gathering.

PANETTA: Quite the contrary, senator. I am very familiar with the work of Dulles, Helms, Schlesinger, Colby, Follett, Clancy, le Carré, and Ian Fleming.

ROCKEFELLER: Let's move on to torture. How will you make certain the agency does not engage in such brutal tactics as waterboarding?

PANETTA: Forget about waterboarding, senator. Imagine being strapped down to a table as a laser beam is slowly creeping up on you. You'll tell them anything! You just don't want to be split in two! But no, they don't expect you to talk. They expect you to die!

ROCKEFELLER: I think I'm done. Allow me to yield to the gentle lady from Maryland, Sen. Mikulski.

MIKULSKI: Mr. Panetta, can you share with us your thoughts on how you would improve our intelligence gathering capabilities in Russia and the former Soviet republics?

PANETTA: There's an awful lot we do not know about the Russians. But at the same time, they don't know a lot about us. No sir. For example, they don't know that we successfully got a hold of a high-tech Soviet submarine with stealth-like capabilities. We were only lucky the captain wanted to defect.

MIKULSKI: I think we need to adjourn.

PANETTA: Great! Because I sure could use a real drink. Like a vodka martini. I prefer mine shaken, not

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